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It's not catharsis, it's cognition: A new approach to emotion in composition

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It's Not Catharsis; It's Cognition: A New Approach to Emotion In Composition

(TITLE)

BY

Caronia (Nia) Klein

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Abstract

Therapeutic writing, or writing as a method of emotional healing, seeks to facilitate psychological healing through self-discovery as a result of analyzing, interpreting, and making conclusions about challenging life experiences. Likewise, in composition theory, expressivist, feminist, and collaborative pedagogies advocate the empowerment of students through discovery and articulation of voice as a way to make meaning and develop as persons and students. Both approaches to writing foreground the use of personal experience as a way to process the external world through the emotional landscape of the writer, yet critics of emotionally expressive writing decry its usefulness to composition pedagogy because of its subjective, relativistic nature. Additionally, opponents of personal and emotionally expressive writing express concerns about the ethical and practical issues associated with situating emotion in firs-year composition while questioning the tendency of these models to privilege students' texts over outside texts.

However, Laura Micciche suggests that emotion is "a category of analysis" through which the writer can think and ultimately, acquire knowledge (2). In that respect, this analytical process catalyzed by emotion can lead to improved writing in first-year composition and a life long desire to use writing for personal and professional advancement.

This thesis combines the research about therapeutic writing and the theories of expressivist, feminist, collaborative, and process pedagogies to argue for an emerging point of contact for emotionally expressive and personal writing. By mining the deficits found in the current literature in regard to the use of this type of writing in first-year

composition I have developed a pedagogy based on the notion that emotion can provide a resource through which students can gain entry into knowledge-generating discourse and argue that the use of emotion and personal writing can achieve the goals of the academy while promoting an environment where students will emerge as more engaged writers and critical thinkers.

Dedication

I'd like to dedicate this thesis to my steadfast, loving husband Jim, without whose support this project could not have been completed and to my children, Kelly and Kevin, Erin, and Brian, who continue to support and humor me in all of my endeavors.

I love you all and could not have done this without you.

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And most importantly, I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation for my director, Dr. Tim Taylor. When I first started the program I couldn't see how to integrate my special interests into the field of composition and rhetoric. I was able to do so only with the help, encouragement, and guidance of Dr. Taylor. Thank you for your belief in and support of my project. Without your insight and expertise my ideas could not have been expanded into such meaningful thesis.

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Introduction

In this thesis, I argue for a new approach to the use of personal and emotionally expressive writing in first-year composition. This new approach honors and respects the usefulness of emotionally expressive writing to do the work of the academy, to facilitate critical thinking, and improve writing skills. To that end, I have developed a pedagogy that reflects the belief in the rhetorical power of emotion to assist students in analyzing their own experiences and ideas in relation to those in the world around them.

The first chapter examines the historical underpinnings of the therapeutic writing movement and the research generated by social psychologists, psychiatrists, and composition scholars in this area. The research movement into the therapeutic benefits of writing was led by James Pennebaker and carried on by several others. I introduce these researchers and their work in this chapter. Additionally, I review brain functioning to illustrate the cognitive processes involved in emotionally expressive writing and how these relate to learning and memory. Therefore, I present several pertinent studies at length in an effort to provide a solid theoretical background for writing as healing.

Chapter two highlights the tenets of the therapeutic writing model and the theories of expressivist, feminist, collaborative, and process pedagogies while making connections between the two. The objective of relating the two modes of thinking is to situate the benefits of emotionally expressive writing within a sound base of composition theory and practice. The connections established between therapeutic writing and composition pedagogy set the stage for the integration of the two into a new pedagogical approach.

In chapter three, I address concerns about the ethical and practical issues, such as self-disclosure and evaluation, associated with situating emotionally expressive writing in

first-year composition. The subject of student vs. external texts is also examined in this chapter. I offer my own arguments in rebuttal, maintaining that the notion of allowing emotionally expressive writing in first-year composition is not an either/or proposition, but, rather, a both/and hybrid approach that can significantly enhance the outcomes of these writing classes.

And finally, in the last chapter, I offer a hybrid pedagogy that includes suggestions for in-class exercises, major writing assignments, a grading rubric, and a sample syllabus to illustrate how emotion-based writing can be interwoven into a first-year composition course that emphasizes writing for different audiences and purposes. It is my hope that this practical guide will embolden teachers to use emotionally expressive writing to achieve the goals they seek and will offer them assurance of the efficacy of emotion as a powerful rhetorical strategy for writers.

Chapter 1

It's Not (Just) Catharsis; It's Cognition

Therapeutic writing uses writing as an agent for psychological and physical healing. The written expression of emotion facilitates self-discovery and enhances cognitive functioning, and proponents of therapeutic writing claim that the processing of emotion through writing leads to increased well being and better learning outcomes. To them, therapeutic writing is a method that promotes the wellness (whether psychological or physical) of the writer as a result of analyzing, interpreting, and making conclusions about life experiences. This school of thought about writing exists in a loosely structured movement known as "writing as healing" although that term is not consistently used in its literature. Both writers and psychologists have advanced the movement since the early 1980s. The writers who have led the way in building models for the therapeutic use of writing tend to emphasize the creative nature of writing, while psychologists point to writing's influence on health. Together they have created another purpose for the act of writing: the promotion of healthy changes, whether physical, mental, and cognitive in the writer/patient. These changes form the basis of the therapeutic writing model and have implications for first-year composition. In this chapter I will first present the perspective of the scholars who advocate therapeutic writing and then provide the historical and scientific underpinnings reached through research.

In promoting psychological or physical health, practitioners of the therapeutic model base their beliefs on the theory that "[w]riting about difficulties enables us to discover the wholeness of things, the connectedness of human experience" (Desalvo 43).

So "writing about difficulties" helps individuals gain understanding, places life events in context, and diffuses the emotional power of the event by translating experience into words that are tangible and, consequently, malleable by the writer. This type of writing gives people the ability to exert control over events or experiences. With this increased sense of control over both experiences and feelings surrounding these experiences, writers are then able to view their circumstances in new, different, or creative ways, which leads to changes in perception. Sharon Bray in "A Healing Journey Writing Together Through Breast Cancer" attributes this sense of control to the capacity of writing to unlock the writer's creativity to "re-create experience in a symbolic way" through written language (14). The creative force within the individual writer helps provides solutions to perceived problems or alters the way the event is understood within a larger context. And this re-vision of the situation is the basis for change or healing.

The symbolic re-creation of experience reflects one of the components of the therapeutic writing model according to Bray. In this methodology, she maintains that four conditions must exist for writing to initiate a healing response in the writer. The first condition allows for emotional processing by invoking both positive and negative emotions through the use of writing prompts and allowing these emotions to find their way into the writing. The writer must create a coherent narrative that includes "structure, causal explanation, repetition of themes, [and] awareness and appreciation of a listener's perspective" (21). After the initial writing session, emotional processing continues to take place when the writer is encouraged to expand the writing by adding or deleting details, focusing on a specific feeling that surfaced, or re-framing the subject of the written piece to reflect a different perspective. The story created by the writer and the

writer's thought processes become more refined and interpretive as the writer continues to reflect on what has been written. And finally, in order for positive outcomes to arise from written emotional expression, the writing should take place in an environment that is safe, supportive, and confidential (20-22).

While the setting needs to be consistently trustworthy and secure, therapeutic writing may occur in a variety of venues. Sharon Bray and Pat Schneider advocate writing groups, stating that writing with others decreases feelings of isolation, alienation, and stigmatization in writers (Bray 25). In addition to the group model, another proponent of therapeutic writing, Louise DeSalvo, offers a format and structure for individuals to use writing as a healing tool. She spells out specific guidelines and writing prompts to aid the writer in his/her exploration of emotional subjects (DeSalvo 78-90). Psychotherapists may use writing with clients in the counseling session in the treatment of depression, grief, or post-traumatic stress disorder (Schiraldi 177). Clients are often asked to confront feelings in the form of an unsent letter to someone who has caused them pain or to release negative emotions through journaling. Writing as healing has been used with many different populations such as breast cancer patients/survivors (Bray 3), HIV/AIDS patients (Nye 385), survivors of violence against women (Julier 357), those who suffer from addictions (Ames and Pennebaker 1555), students who have stress related to starting college (Pennebaker "Opening Up," 80) and low income women in a Massachusetts housing project (Schneider 262). These examples represent the vast array of populations who have experienced the therapeutic benefits of writing.

Writing gained status as a specific healing tool for the various populations mentioned above because scientific research has supported what writers have always

known about the power of the written word. Writing acts as an easily accessible and effective therapeutic tool when used to communicate and evaluate emotional responses in one's life. From the 1970s to present the potential healing quality of writing has been documented by research into the quantifiable and qualitative effects of writing.

Scholars in the area of writing as healing consider James Pennebaker the forerunner in research regarding the therapeutic aspects of writing. A social psychologist, Pennebaker's primary interest was in the role of what he calls "confession" or confronting and talking about negative emotions, in physical health ("Opening Up" 2). He began his career in the 1970s working to "find some answers concerning the nature of secrets, self-disclosure and health," setting up experiments in which subjects talked about previously withheld information about themselves to others in group settings (3). Therefore, he limited his initial research to evaluating the effects of talking about difficult situations on health (2). It wasn't until Pennebaker suffered from his own depressive episode that his thinking went beyond understanding the effects of "confessional" talking to writing about emotions. During this time Pennebaker refused to talk about what he was experiencing, but he began to write about his feelings instead. After a week of writing ten minutes a day, he noticed an improvement in his mood (30). Pennebaker's experience with writing pushed his research in another direction. Instead of talking with others about emotionally difficult situations, he wanted to find out if writing would yield the same results for individuals.

Pennebaker began his inquiries into the relationship of writing to emotional and physical well being in the early 1980s. Believing that emotional health influenced physical health, Pennebaker based his early research into how writing influences well

being on the hypothesis that just as talking about negative emotions helps individuals move beyond its residual effects, writing involved the mechanism of dismantling inhibition or the holding back of emotion. When Pennebaker began his studies on the benefits of writing on physical/psychological health, he started with the assumption that writing provided a way for individuals to safely confront uncomfortable feelings or events in their lives just as talking to a psychotherapist or a trusted friend seems to make people feel better. Prior to his studies, it had been well documented in the psychobiological literature that failure to confront such events or thoughts reflects "immediate biological changes...increasing the probability of illness and other stress-related physical and psychological problems" ("Opening Up" 9). Based on his beliefs and the prior research, Pennebaker expected quantifiable changes in subjects engaged in personal writing tasks—the same kind of changes clients of psychotherapy or the "talking cure," exhibit. Confronting and grappling with emotionally charged topics and reconciling internal conflict through writing should have positive effects on health.

Pennebaker's initial research provided the evidence he was looking for—writing had therapeutic qualities. In his first study on the effects of writing on health, Pennebaker asked for volunteers from the pool of students enrolled in the introductory psychology course at Southern Methodist University where he was teaching at the time. Pennebaker and his associates advised the subjects of the nature of the study (they would be asked to write about deeply personal topics). They also assured the subjects that they could withdraw from the study at anytime without being penalized. These subjects also completed a health and mood inventory prior to beginning the study. Forty-six students enrolled in the study; none dropped out (31-32).

The forty-six subjects were randomly assigned to one of four writing groups, all of which wrote for fifteen minutes a day on four consecutive days. Group one was instructed to write about a traumatic experience and their feelings about that experience. Group two wrote only about the emotional component of the traumatic experience without directly mentioning the event. Group three only related the facts regarding the traumatic experience in the writing task and the control group was given an assignment to write about an irrelevant topic, such as describing their shoes ("Opening Up" 32).

Pennebaker and his fellow researchers found the results astounding. At the end of the study, the subjects were required to complete the health and mood checklists again. When the pre- and post lists were compared, Pennebaker found subjects who wrote about a traumatic experience *and* their feelings surrounding the event reported a 50% drop in health center visits over the other three groups. Additionally, students in this same group (event and feelings) indicated improved moods from the beginning of the study. Writing simply about feelings, facts, or an irrelevant topic did not provide therapeutic effects ("Opening Up" 32).

These results prompted Pennebaker to expand his research to look into how writing affected very specific health markers such as white blood cell and lymphocyte levels as indicated in the immune system response. His first study provided a general, subjective response: decreased health center visits. He hypothesized that decreased health center visits, suggesting a decrease in number of illnesses, might indicate immune system involvement. To test this theory, Pennebaker teamed up with an immunologist, Ronald Glaser, from the Ohio State University College of Medicine ("Opening Up" 35). The fifty students enrolled in their study had blood samples drawn before and after the

study to measure white blood cell and lymphocyte levels. During the study the subjects were divided into two groups. Each group wrote twenty minutes a day for four consecutive days, with half writing about a traumatic experience and their feelings about that experience and the other half writing on a superficial topic. The results of this study showed heightened immune system functioning (evidenced by elevated white blood cell and lymphocyte counts) in the subjects who wrote about negative experiences and their feelings about those experiences, and the immune system response lasted six weeks ("Opening Up" 35). Additionally, this research found no differences in the results in regard to race, sex, age, ethnicity, or cultural background and was independent of social feedback on the writing ("Opening Up" 35). These initial studies provided quantifiable evidence of the therapeutic effects of writing, so Pennebaker concluded that translating traumatic or negative emotional experience into language positively influences physical health.

In numerous subsequent studies, Pennebaker's findings remained consistent. A positive correlation existed between emotionally expressive writing and health. However, all of these populations consisted of individuals who were clinically healthy. They had no overt symptomolgy or reported illnesses. The question before researchers at this point was whether emotionally expressive writing could help alleviate the symptoms of individuals who suffered from medical conditions. Psychiatrist Joshua Smythe sought to find out if subjects with clinical disease processes might also experience improved health as a result of the writing task Pennebaker had developed. In his 1999 groundbreaking study, Smythe modified the writing protocol slightly for his asthma and rheumatoid arthritis patients. Smythe randomly assigned the subjects of this study to one

of two groups: one that wrote on a neutral topic and one that wrote about "the most stressful event of their lives" (Harris 188). Each group wrote twenty minutes a day for three consecutive days.

Pennebaker's initial findings generalized to an "unhealthy" population since subjects in Smythe's study who wrote about the stressful event showed improved health status over pre-study indicators. The asthma patients showed improvement in lung functioning, and the arthritis patients reported a decrease in severity of symptoms for four months after the end of the writing period (JAMA 1304). Smythe's findings added a new dimension to the therapeutic writing paradigm. Unhealthy individuals benefited from writing about their feelings just as those without medical conditions did.

Evidence now existed to support the health benefits of writing for both healthy and unhealthy groups of individuals. Yet the populations used in these projects possessed specific identifying qualities, one group, students, and the other, patients suffering from arthritis or asthma. Research findings are not considered remarkable unless and until they can be generalized to multiple populations. Over the next two decades, Pennebaker continued to broaden his research both in terms of populations and outcomes. Pennebaker's subsequent studies utilized the same writing protocol with a variety of populations including middle-age male job seekers, prison inmates, and nursing home residents ("Opening Up" 40). All of the populations exhibited similar responses by showing improvement of several well being indicators. Smythe categorized and summarized the data gleaned from Pennebaker's multiple projects in his article "Written Emotional Expression: Effect Sizes, Outcomes Types, and Moderating Variables," and his statistical analysis provides evidence that "[t]he written emotional expression task

thus lead to improved reported health, psychological well-being, physiological functioning and general functioning" (Smythe 178). For a complete list of specific outcomes see Appendix A (the chart on page 178 of Smythe's article). The overwhelming conclusions of these studies suggest that writing about negative or traumatic events create positive physical and mental health outcomes (Smythe 174). These research findings indicate that the original hypothesis was correct: writing provided a safe and effective way to discharge the effects of previously repressed negative emotions.

While writing about negative emotions/events elicits dramatic quantifiable health outcomes, the emphasis on negative emotions is disconcerting for those who teach writing. Writing about positive experiences and its possible effects on well being offers a new direction for researchers to pursue. While studies looking into the effects of writing about positive emotions or experiences are not as numerous as those investigating writing about trauma, the past few years have seen an increase in studies seeking to further establish the connection. Researchers at the University of Missouri recently carried out such a study. In 2007, these researchers conducted an experiment in which they attempted to ascertain the minimum time requirement needed to elicit writing's therapeutic effects. Chad M. Burton and Laura A. King called their conclusion "the two-minute miracle" (9). Burton and King randomly assigned subjects (undergraduate students) to one of three writing prompts: write about a trauma, a positive experience, or a control topic. The subjects were instructed to write on the assigned topic for two minutes for two days (9). Subjects rated their moods before and after each writing according to a standard Likert scale (1=not at all, 5=a great deal). They were also asked

to rate a list of physical complaints and their feelings about the writing experience on the same type of scale. The content of the essays generated by the subjects was also evaluated in terms of word usage (10). After analyzing the data and the contents of the writing, Burton and King were able to show statistical evidence that writing about trauma and writing about a positive experience produced the same beneficial health effects (11). The data revealed that subjects who engaged in emotional expression in their writing (either positive or negative) had more positive mood indicators, less physical complaints, and reported finding the "writing to be more important, meaningful, emotional, and interesting" (11). Therefore, it appears that writing about emotions of any kind can be therapeutic.

The Burton and King study shows that writing doesn't need to contain negative emotional content, but that positive emotion also has beneficial effects. Another study makes a connection between written emotional expression, both positive and negative, and learning outcomes. In this lesser-known study, Pennebaker tested the notion that emotional or reflective writing can aid learning. Pennebaker had team taught, for several semesters, a course entitled "Social and Political Institutions" in which he and his colleagues had experienced great difficulty engaging students with the reading material or in classroom discussions. Finally, they required the students to write for ten minutes at the beginning of each class period about their thoughts and feelings about the day's topic. The students in Pennebaker's class began to participate in classroom discussion more readily, attended class more regularly, and showed improvement in their grades over the course of the semester ("Opening Up" 187). The students also reported that the writing, even though it was emotional in content, helped them integrate the ideas and understand

the course material better (187). These students used their emotional response to the course material as a way to better understand the disciplinary material, and so doing were able to engage in classroom discussion of the material.

However, while the studies reported here support the notion that confronting negative emotions and expressing positive ones is good for many different populations, researchers were still unclear as to the mechanism(s) that produced the changes. Pennebaker and his research team now wondered if other psychological or mental processes were involved in this phenomenon. Not satisfied that the mechanism was as simple as dismantling inhibitory processes (for how would emotional disinhibition influence the cognitive processes required in learning new course material), Pennebaker and his fellow researchers designed questionnaires that would provide some additional data and prompt research in other directions. The post-study surveys, developed in the early 1990s, revealed that certain linguistic factors played an important role in the writing of those subjects who reported the most benefit. After noticing the recurrence of particular kinds of words, Pennebaker and his associates developed a tool, the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC), to evaluate the language of the essays of the most helped subjects (Pennebaker, "Opening Up" 102). The LIWC found that essays that used words to express causation and insight such as "because," "realize," "understand," or "think" were the most helpful in producing lasting benefits (Lowe 63). This new information suggests that catharsis or breaking down inhibition does not fully explain the effects of emotionally expressive writing. The use of words that connote causation and/or insight perhaps point to the evidence of higher cognitive functions. Insight or

understanding implies interpretation, analysis, synthesis, and re-framing, or arriving at new relationships between the self and the world.

The notion that insight or understanding evolves from written emotional expression indicates the presence of higher cognitive functioning. Cognitive functions can be explained by brain anatomy and the specialized, interconnected workings of each of its constituent parts. Since the brain is intimately involved in the processing of emotion and the making of meaning through the mechanism of written language, it is important to look at how the brain processes the emotional side of human experience in regards to language. As Alice Brand writes, "[i]ndeed, language, cognition, and emotion come together in the brain. That is why we must study it" (202). The following is a brief overview of how the brain processes emotional input.

Deep inside the cerebrum, the conscious, thinking part of the brain, lays the hippocampus and amygdala. The hippocampus regulates semantic mapping, or the process of providing contextual or relational information regarding an event. It is also the storehouse of "narrative memory," memory that is put into language (Hawkins 27). The amygdala is the more "emotional" of the two; it receives input quickly and bypasses the cognitive brain, so events are "unmediated by intellectual processes" (Brand 208). The amygdala only receives the "raw" data, so to speak; it does not interpret it. It is responsible for our fear reaction when someone jumps out at us before we have the time to figure out if this person is a friend or means us harm. The connections between the hippocampus (with its ability to contextualize) and the amygdala facilitate sensory integration, by converting sensory input into feelings and behavior. Simply put, the amygdala provides the emotions, and the hippocampus provides context for the emotional

response. In the above example, the emotional reaction of the amygdala is mediated by a memory of a previous, similar episode and helps the brain determine whether to stay put or run away.

All of these processes occur at an unconscious level and without linguistic attachment. Without linguistic attachment or the ability to name and identify input, there is no meaning or significance. When the hippocampus receives data from the amygdala, it becomes situated in relation to memory (Brand 214). Both the amygdala and the hippocampus are involved in memory. The hippocampus processes contextual and relational information through consciousness. Events are learned and remembered by the amygdala and contextualized by the hippocampus, forming deep, narrative memory.

But in order to reach conscious awareness, the combined data from the amygdala and hippocampus must travel neural pathways to the pre-frontal cortex. The pre-frontal cortex is the logical, analytical, and *linguistic* part of the brain that "functions to interpret the meaning of our experiences" and arrives at cognitive beliefs about them (Lehman 9). Here language comes into play by altering the way events are represented and understood by the brain. Moreover, these neural pathways are dynamic. The brain's ability to modify thoughts and behavior through language is the basis of learning and (creating new) memory (Brand 217). Therefore, learning and memory are cognitive tasks that cannot be performed without the emotional input the amygdala supplies (Brand 216). Emotion not only drives learning but motivates it as well. Memory is part of the conscious context through which we make decisions regarding action. The reaction of fear to fire causes us to pull away from a flame, but memory of the event situates the fear and enables us to make the connections necessary to avoid the situation the next time.

Memory is, obviously, integral to learning. The acquisition of new knowledge depends on memory to form connections between the new information and what is already known. New knowledge must be synthesized into memory in order to give it meaning and to become accessible and applicable. Interestingly, memory is also positively influenced by written expression of emotion. To test this notion, researchers Kitty Klein and Adriel Boals conducted a study involving working memory and writing about emotion and they define working memory (WM) as "the controlled processing and attention needed for higher order processes such as comprehension, reasoning, planning, and problem-solving" (520). If WM is compromised in some way, leading to disruptions in these higher cognitive functions of "comprehension, reasoning, planning, and problem-solving," learning is jeopardized. Therefore, working memory is vital to the learning process.

Klein and Boals followed the basic protocol designed by Pennebaker. In their study of college freshmen, however, only two writing groups were used: one that wrote about "their deepest thoughts and feelings about coming to college" and a control group that wrote about time management (521). They also administered pre/post-tests in terms of WM, health /well-being indicators, and analysis of word usage content. Their results supported those of Pennebaker and Smythe, but they also showed that emotionally expressive writing increased available WM. This improvement in WM capacity was linked to an increased ability to store and transform information (525). Klein and Boals postulated that writing that involved emotional content increased the subject's ability to attend to the task at hand, and this practice resulted in enhanced cognitive performance. Trauma or negative emotions appear to compete with WM resources. The release of

these emotions through writing enabled subjects to free up these resources, granting more space for cognitive tasks. Klein and Boals state, "psychosocial manipulation can alter available WM capacity and that these changes persist and have consequences for other important outcomes, such as *academic* (italics mine) performance" (525). In their study, Klein and Boals found these changes in WM availability led to increased narrative coherence and ultimately better grades across the disciplines for the students (525).

As with Pennebaker's research, Klein and Boals connected the improvements the students experienced to the use of causal or insight words. Language that denotes understanding and expresses relationships between feelings and events are the result of cognitive shifts according to Smythe (180). This is where what we know about the amygdala and hippocampus contributes to our understanding of how written expression and emotion work together. Writing becomes the "transduction of memory from sensory-affective components into organized linguistic form" (Smythe 180). Language helps us organize our experiences, including, and most notably, our emotional ones. While these actions are initiated by the brain at a very primal level, human beings are unique in their ability to arrive at meaning through language. According to Judith Harris in "Re-writing the Subject: Psychoanalytic Approaches to Creative Writing and Composition Pedagogy," "language proliferation requires the simultaneous interplay of cognitive and emotional actions" (179). Through language, we can create new meaning when we attach words to an already (emotionally) experienced event.

Clearly, the emotional cannot be extricated from the cognitive. Learning and memory cannot occur without emotional input at some level. Emotions shape how and what we think, the ideas we formulate, and the actions we take. From the research cited

so far, there appear to be two ways in which writing about emotions aid the development of critical thinking and writing abilities. Constructing a narrative about an emotional event seems to organize once fragmented thoughts and feelings and the act of writing serves to give order and make sense of emotional responses and through emotional and/or reflective writing, people begin to make connections between thoughts and actions by analyzing and synthesizing until a new perspective is reached.

Analysis and synthesis occur over time as writers repeat the exercise of personal writing. Pennebaker notes that this repetition leads not only to increased understanding of the event, but it also results in a progressively more coherent and concise narrative. Writers become increasingly adept at determining which details support their story and which detract ("Opening Up" 13). Throughout this process, writers are "originating and creating a unique verbal construct that is graphically recorded" (Emig 8). Because the act of writing is recursive and slower than talking, it allows writers the opportunity to continually organize and re-organize thoughts, draw inferences through the process, and make adjustments, or revise, as new meaning or knowledge is acquired. As pointed out earlier, those research subjects who benefited the most from personal writing on the basis of all indicators (physical, psychological and behavioral) used "causal or insight" words in their writing, giving evidence of higher-order cognitive processes such as critical thinking.

Higher-order cognitive functioning is not dependent on the type of emotion involved. Pennebaker's study of in-class writing about intellectually difficult material exemplifies not only the use of emotion as a "category of analysis," but as Laura Micciche describes in *Doing Emotion Rhetoric, Writing, Teaching* it also speaks to the

way in which personal writing can positively affect learning outcomes (2). As Klein and Boals conclude from their study regarding working memory, writing about feelings, whether negative or not, reduces the amount of competition between emotions and the task at hand (520). Since memory is involved in critical cognitive functions, reducing emotional drain enables memory do what it was meant to do: categorize, organize, interpret, and analyze information in relation to past knowledge and experience. Freeing up available working memory increases the individual's ability to direct attention to and, therefore, engagement in "tasks requiring executive functions" (520). Engagement must precede learning, for as Ann E. Berthoff writes in "Is Teaching Still Possible? Writing, Meaning and Higher Order Reasoning," "until the mind of the learner is engaged, no meaning will be made, no knowledge can be won" (330). Once the capacity to engage is increased, learning can occur.

The studies about the therapeutic effects of writing are well established, and these ideas connect to prominent research in composition studies as well. According to Janet Emig in "Writing as a Mode of Learning," "[w]riting involves the fullest possible functioning of the brain" (10). Borrowing from psychologists Lev Vygotsky, A.R. Luria and Jerome Bruner, Emig makes the case that writing is learning because it integrates both emotion and analysis, helps writers make connections "through lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical devices," and actively engages the writer on a personal level (14). The research of Pennebaker, Smythe, Klein and Boals, and others presented in this chapter support this notion of writing and the writing process. Improved writing and cognitive functioning results from writing that involves all components of the human experience: emotion, memory, and the acquisition of new knowledge or changed perspective.

Complex and intricate pathways existing between several different parts of the brain are involved, synthesizing the specific information from each, making inferences and arriving at conclusions regarding the incoming data. The information that passes along these neural pathways cannot reach their intended destination in conscious awareness without the additional information and perspective that emotion supplies.

Writing, as a performative act, combines the creative, emotional attributes that designate right brain hemisphere activity with the more logical, linear processes of the left hemisphere. Research has shown that beyond physical and psychological benefits, emotional writing produces a more coherent, concise narrative, reduces the impact of trauma or negative emotional events on the mind, helps in acquiring and remembering new information, organizes and synthesizes thoughts, and fosters problem-solving as a result of its recursive quality and slower pace.

I have presented in this first chapter a scientific basis for how emotion performs in relation to higher cognitive functions and how researchers have documented the therapeutic qualities of writing as a means to achieve positive behavioral, academic, and health outcomes. These cognitive functions are directly related to the learning and writing process and elicit the kind of critical thinking skills we seek in writing classes. The data is solid and quantifiable, but more importantly the studies support the cognitive, expressive, and feminist pedagogies of composition. The next chapter will explore these pedagogies by making connections between therapeutic writing and these models for teaching writing. In addition, the features of these composition theories will be compared and contrasted with current models of therapeutic writing through the example of a common therapeutic writing exercise.

Chapter 2

Establishing Connections Between Therapeutic Writing and Composition Pedagogy

To many in composition studies, therapeutic writing appears to have limited use and relevance in relation to first-year composition. Clearly, most of the populations studied by the researchers presented in Chapter 1 were not first-year composition classrooms. As Barnett relates, to align "therapy" with teaching or composition could take the *praxis* of teaching writing into ethically dangerous territory (Barnett 356). However, the basic form of writing used in the therapeutic writing model is similar to teaching methods used in many composition courses. The personal essay is foundational to the therapeutic writing model and expressivist, feminist, and process pedagogies; but it is devalued by some composition scholars because of its subjective nature. While the personal essay is not a new concept in composition studies, the therapeutic qualities of writing this kind of essay have only recently been documented in scientific literature (see Chapter 1). The notion that these qualities are relevant to teaching writing and can occupy a place in first-year composition is a new development since the scholarship that connects therapeutic writing to composition classroom practice has emerged only since the beginning of the twenty-first century (Anderson and MacCurdy, Moran, Mlynarczyk).

Both historically and in practice, therapeutic writing shares many tenets and attributes with important composition pedagogies. In this chapter, I will use examples of therapeutic writing exercises to demonstrate the commonalties that exist between therapeutic writing and expressivist, feminist, collaborative, and process pedagogies.

The goal of establishing these connections is to build a model for classroom practice that incorporates elements of all these approaches in order to improve the writing skills required for academic discourse: reflection, analysis, synthesis and persuasion.

Historical Background

Therapeutic writing and expresssivist, feminist, collaborative, and process pedagogies emerged during the same time period in American political and educational history. The 1960s and 1970s are historically identified as a period of American history characterized by a general distrust of government and examination of the traditional values that had previously defined the American way of life (Tobin 2; Burnham 24; Jarratt 113). Freedom of personal (and political) expression was seen as a tool for challenging those in authority in all sectors of American life. This turbulent time in American history also gave rise to composition pedagogies that encouraged the free expression of dissent and critique of cultural norms. As a result, this time period, both socially and educationally, witnessed the emergence of expressivist, feminist, collaborative, and process pedagogies along with the writing as healing movement.

Like the new political rhetoric of the time, these approaches to writing pedagogy sought to contest the existing structure of the composition classroom. Expressivist composition pedagogy as practiced by Peter Elbow, Donald Murray, Ken McCrorie, and others constituted a response to the current traditional pedagogy that focused on correct forms, grammar, and lecture-based methods of teaching writing (Burnham 21). Lad Tobin attributes the first inklings of the process movement to Murray and Elbow as a function of how these writing teachers taught students to write—changing the emphasis

from the finished product to the actual composing strategies of writing (2). While expressive and process pedagogies feature an inward focus and perhaps elevate the status of the individual writer and the writing process, the collaborative approach took a more outward focus by placing the writer in a social context. According to Kenneth Bruffee, one of the forerunners of the social constructionist model, the collaborative approach to writing grew out of an effort to generate change in the status quo, or the socio-cultural-political climate of the time (416). The political and social climate of the 60s and 70s led to the trend of expressive, process, and collaborative pedagogies that privileged students' texts. In addition, this climate set the stage for the introduction of feminist thought into composition studies. Susan Jarratt, for example, credits these pedagogical movements with "creat[ing] a welcoming situation for a feminist practice" that broadened in scope in the 1980s (114). All of these pedagogies are student-centered, value the writing process, and arose in response to changes in social norms.

The early proponents of the therapeutic writing movement emerged from this same time period and were likewise concerned with change. In therapeutic writing the emphasis was on personal change rather than social or political change since its advocates, like Sharon Bray, were writers who had experienced the benefits of writing through life difficulties. Others were feminists, such as Gabriele Rico, or activists, such as Pat Schneider, who worked with marginalized groups, and sought to share their newfound knowledge with others (Schneider 265). The emphasis in the 1960s and 1970s on voice, whether personal or political, enabled these writers to develop the writing as healing technique in an effort to help others who felt marginalized or oppressed. The motivations for the therapeutic writing movement and expressivist, feminist,

collaborative, and process pedagogies seem to have arisen from the same social and political concerns: to give voice to those who had previously been silenced.

The therapeutic writing movement and the innovative approaches to composition studies that marked the 1960s and 70s shared more than a desire to privilege writers' voices. The expressivist, feminist, process, and collaborative approaches to composition also share some basic tenets and practices with the therapeutic writing model. All of them place the student/writer at the center of learning as an outgrowth of the belief that students possess knowledge that is unique to them personally and culturally. Proponents view writing as a process of discovery. Also central to these writing philosophies is the belief that students/writers make meaning through language—that meaning and knowledge is constructed both internally (from the student's own experience) and externally or socially (when that experience meets the world). These goals are often reached through the shared practices of freewriting, reflective and personal writing, and redefining the roles of teachers and classroom structure. It is apparent that expressivist, feminist, collaborative, and process pedagogies generally intersect at many points, and these points are consistent with the practices of therapeutic writing. The sections that follow will illustrate these points of convergence more specifically in both theory and practice.

Teachers/Facilitators, Classroom/Group Structure

The role of teachers in the expressivist, feminist, collaborative, or process-oriented classroom differ from the role of teachers in "traditional" composition classrooms. The therapeutic group leader or facilitator follows a similar pattern in regard

to how they manage a group, one that emulates the teaching strategies of expressivist, feminist, collaborative, and process pedagogies. The role the teacher/facilitator plays creates a specific and identifiable classroom/group structure; one that these models believe is necessary for the advancement of writing skills and personal growth. In both the composition pedagogies and therapeutic writing, the teacher/facilitator is an encourager, coach, and collaborator rather than an authority in regard to writing as presented in the current traditional model. Elbow crystallized the concept of the "teacherless" writing class when he announced the idea in the title of his often quoted book, *Writing Without Teachers.* This approach is based on his belief that students possess the basic communication skills needed for effective writing and that feedback from peers progresses writers' abilities as much as feedback from teachers ("A Method for Teaching English"). While this strategy does not actually take the teacher out of the classroom, it does redefine his/her role. Rather than assign topics and attend to correct form, grammar, and punctuation, students in these types of classrooms generate their own topics for writing, and student texts are privileged over outside texts since it is their texts that provide the material from which improvements in writing can be made. Instead of attempting to emulate external texts that are considered examples of "good" writing, the focus is on teaching students' to work with their own writing as they learn basic writing conventions.

This teaching model is consistent with therapeutic writing group practice. The most commonly used therapeutic writing group practice and the one that I use in my own writing groups is based on a model developed by the Amherst Writers and Artists Association, which was founded by one of the forerunners of the therapeutic writing

movement, Pat Schneider (*Writing Alone and With Others)*. The facilitator of a therapeutic writing group in this model is considered neither an expert writer nor an expert in the common situation that brings the group together but rather a fellow traveler in the journey toward healing (Bray *A Healing Journey* 9). Because of the facilitator's status as "fellow traveler," topics for writing come from both the facilitator and the group participants. And similar to Elbow's classroom model, content (of the writing) is more important than form since writing about a particular experience is believed to lead to healing in that area. In each setting, writers have input into writing topics, while the teacher/facilitator concentrates on what the writer is trying to express rather than how the ideas are expressed (in correct form).

Another way that therapeutic writing groups promote this egalitarian view is to encourage the facilitator to participate in the writing exercises along with group members. The facilitator/leader writes along with the group and is able to share her/his work with group members by reading his/her written piece out loud. This practice of writing/sharing with the group promotes the image of the facilitator as an equal and full participant in the therapeutic process. The notion of the therapeutic writing group leader/facilitator as a co-writer with group members aligns with the expressivist, feminist, collaborative, and process concept of the writing teacher. In these pedagogies the teacher is not seen as an authoritative figure who tells students how or what they should write but as someone who guides students in the writing process. In each instance, the collaborative aspect of the teacher/leader, student/writer relationship creates an environment suitable for writing, a safe environment to explore personal experience and/or emotion.

So, the primary function of a therapeutic writing group leader is to create an environment in which writers can safely and creatively explore feelings and thoughts writing prompts elicit. The writer is the voice of authority in the therapeutic writing group in terms of personal experience, feelings, and the writing just as students occupy a central position in the expressivist and feminist classroom (Jarratt 115). An environment conducive to the therapeutic process of writing is established through a centering exercise. In the therapeutic writing group, the centering exercise is usually a group-established ritual, such as lighting a candle, or a guided imagery session. These kinds of strategies are intended to focus the participants toward the writing task. While lighting a candle or a guided imagery exercise is not common practice in most writing classrooms, centering exercises are used in other forms in expressivist, feminist, collaborative and process classrooms. Teachers may prepare students for the day's focus by initiating in-class writing exercises such as freewriting or an impromptu written response to an assigned reading. The techniques in both settings create an atmosphere where writers/students are encouraged to explore ideas freely without the constraints that normally coincide with writing for a grade, or attention to grammar, punctuation, and spelling. These centering techniques, whether part of the therapeutic writing group or the classroom, allow writers to grapple with ideas and issues without self-censoring, thereby producing meaningful topics for further exploration.

After the centering activity, the first structured assignment in a therapeutic writing group is theme-based, similar to the types of assignments given to first-year composition students by expressivist, feminist, or collaboratively inspired writing teachers. First-year composition students may be asked to write an essay about conflicts in their lives and

how they resolved them (MacCurdy 193) or describe a job-related experience (Allen 263). In therapeutic writing groups for breast cancer survivors, I often asked writers to reflect on the day they first heard they had cancer or to draw an analogy between a traffic sign and the impact of the diagnosis on their life. In the first-year composition classroom, I have also asked students to engage in theme-based writing when I ask them to analyze a piece of music that has special meaning for them or to reflect on the difficulties they have encountered researching their argumentative papers. The use of themes or a central idea for the writing task directs the writer's attention to a specific topic or thought so that she/he can more fully explore, think about, and analyze. This focused attention to a particular subject or rhetorical task sets the stage for the development of a more complete and cohesive narrative later on in the process—the stage where learning and integration take place, as we will see in a later section.

Community Practices

Therapeutic writing and expressivist, feminist, collaborative, and process pedagogies are similar in their approach to teaching writing and share a commitment to establishing conducive to emotional expression in writing. Additionally, these models institute comparable classroom/group practices to achieve their writing goals. Each approach uses a peer review or workshop model to help writers learn from each other as well as from the teacher/facilitator. The theme-based writing exercise used in both the therapeutic approach and the composition pedagogies provides a text that can then be reviewed by the group (in therapeutic writing) or the class (in composition classrooms), and this review process has clearly defined community practices that are designed to

enhance group cohesiveness and improve writing. Because therapeutic writing often occurs in a group setting, it is easy to think that the peer review component of the group is where "therapy" takes place. It does not because "therapy" is a function of the act of writing and refining the narrative, not the advice or solutions about the writer's experience proffered by other participants.

Just as in the composition classroom, it is the text, not the writer, that is reviewed or critiqued. The main difference between the therapeutic writing group review and that of first-year composition is that group participants have the option to present their work to the group where students are most often required to participate in peer review sessions. This therapeutic writing group practice places the writer within the context of the group community, and the portion of group time devoted to reading and providing feedback echoes the collaborative nature of Bruffee's approach, assuring that writers will interact and converse with others as they reach new levels of understanding (422). The idea here, common to the therapeutic writing model and expressivist, feminist, process, and collaborative pedagogies is to utilize the collective knowledge of the group (or class) through the feedback process to facilitate deeper (analytic) thinking about issues and/or experiences. Group or peer interaction that stimulates these processes of analysis and synthesis helps writers hone these skills with the goal of improving their writing.

The focus on the writer and his/her text in the therapeutic writing group is also foundational to creating the safety required for writers to explore emotionally charged subjects. However, the leader is also called upon to establish group practices that ensure confidentiality and honesty, or what therapeutic writing practitioners call "authenticity," among group members. In order to maintain confidentiality the Amherst model

advocates a practice that assumes all writing composed by group members is not autobiographic but fiction. This allows writers to express potentially volatile, embarrassing, or controversial feelings without having to claim ownership of those feelings before the group (Bray *A Healing Journey* 9). When a piece of writing is treated as fiction, writers are free to experiment with language in whatever way is necessary to achieve insight. While the expressivist, feminist, collaborative and process classrooms emphasize students' texts, critics of these pedagogies assert that the writing is too personal, potentially destabilizing students or distressing teachers. The therapeutic writing practice of treating writing as fiction is a way to provide an emotional safeguard for both leaders and participants. However, it is not the best alternative for first-year composition since this approach would be counterproductive to the acquisition of knowledge and understanding that is the goal of most writing classrooms. I will address this issue more fully in the next chapter, but some strategies that may help teachers deal with uncomfortable emotive writing from students are to institute prescreening criteria (by the teacher) before the peer review or workshop and/or allowing anonymity for emotionally charged essays to be workshopped (Berman 41).

Because this freedom of expression may result in the revelation of personally intimate information, facilitators of therapeutic writing groups must be affirming and empathic in their feedback to set an example for other group members. This tactic is similar to Jeffrey Berman's assertion that the writing classroom should be characterized by empathy and Elbow's directive to identify with fellow writers (Berman 30; Elbow *Writing Without Teachers* 94). A classroom atmosphere of freedom and acceptance would also appear to be necessary for the gender/sexuality issues and struggles that often

mark writing that emerges from a composition class taught from feminist perspectives. Writers grappling with personally intense material require an environment that is safe and emotionally conducive to such exploration while preserving their legitimacy as writers and thinkers. Therapeutic writing proponents value the creativity of an individual writer's response while promoting group cohesion through their inclusive practices, as do practitioners of the expressivist, feminist, collaborative, and process pedagogies when they have students explore personal, cultural, social, or political issues.

Freewriting, Reflective Writing, Revision

The community practices outlined in the previous section create a classroom or group environment that respects personal experience and promotes writing skills necessary for clear, cohesive, analytical expository writing. In addition to similar community/classroom practices, the therapeutic writing model and the above named pedagogies use the same writing strategies to achieve their goals. One of the best ways to illustrate how threads of composition theory weave their way into the practice of writing as healing is to present a popular therapeutic writing exercise that highlights the process involved. As I present this exercise, I will provide the perspective of both the writer and the teacher/facilitator and give specific examples of how therapeutic writing utilizes various aspects of these composition theories. Specific types of writing are conducive to the integration process writers undergo and these will be presented in this section. Writing to learn occurs through writing practices that are unique, and yet common to therapeutic writing and expressivist, feminist, and collaborative pedagogical thought. Each of these pedagogies uses the techniques of freewriting, reflective writing, and

revision in their practices in order to encourage writing that is cohesive, well organized, and addresses the complexities of a particular issue.

The "list" poem is often used as an initial therapeutic writing exercise. The poem teaches writers a technique that can unlock emotional or experiential issues and generate ideas for further writing. All therapeutic writing exercises use a writing prompt to facilitate a writing response (as established earlier). Raymond Carver's poem "Fear" is widely used as a prompt to instruct writers about the "list" poem concept. (For a copy of Carver's poem, please refer to Appendix B.) A "list" poem begins with a single word or phrase, in the case of Carver's poem, "fear," that writers free associate with in the form of a list. The first line of Carver's poem is "Fear of seeing a police car pull into the drive." Other themes that surface in the poem include death, lost love, dogs, money, and "the cleaning woman" (Line 8). This technique is similar to the composition practices of brainstorming and/or freewriting. A "list" poem can generate several ideas that can then be used for future writing exercises in much the same way students use freewriting or other brainstorming techniques to produce potential paper topics or details about topics.

When writing is used as a mechanism for psychological or physical healing, a prompt such as Carver's poem is used as a freewriting exercise. Writers in a therapeutic writing group are asked to respond with their own list poem; they are told to write anything that comes to mind when given a particular word or phrase (usually one that is unique to the population, but "fear" is universal and widely used). Writers are instructed in similar manner to the way Elbow describes freewriting: "write continuously and without self-censoring for a specified period of time" (Elbow; *Writing Without Teachers* 3, Bray *When Words Heal* 28). This process of generation or invention of ideas through a

"list" poem not only supports the expressivist concept of freewriting but also is a part of the pre-writing process that focuses on the writer's "choice of topics," as advocated by process pedagogy (Tobin 4). This free expression/choice in regards to subject matter is consistent with the feminist approach that privileges the writer as a "source of knowledge" and trusts the exercise to reveal to the writer insight or understanding in regards to personal feelings and experience (Jarratt 115). The "list" poems that emerge in a therapeutic writing group serve as the first phase of the writing process, commonly referred to as pre-writing in composition studies.

Therapeutic writers submit this initial draft (of a list poem, for instance) to the group to receive input and feedback on their writing from group members. According to Elbow, Murray, Bruffee, and others, the workshop or peer review aspect of the writing classroom, or the critique of fellow writers, helps students improve their writing. When writers in therapeutic writing groups have written their "list" poems, they have the opportunity to read their work to the group. Reading out loud allows writers to "stress what is important" and gauge the effect their words have on the audience (Elbow; *Writing Without Teachers* 82). Reading out loud, while not a specifically prescribed component of the feminist tradition, would have a similar effect of "enabling [writers] to share with us their knowledge and experience through language" (Jarratt 118). In a therapeutic sense, verbally sharing the writing with the group promotes healing as writers move past isolation and begin to identify with others who share their experience (Bray *A Healing Journey* 101).

Challenging previously held notions regarding knowledge and experience can help both students and those who use writing as a healing tool create their own unique

reactions and responses to the world around them. Insight or meaning emerges as a result of the interaction between private and public or internally constructed knowledge and externally or socially constructed knowledge. My own experience with therapeutic writing exemplifies this process and gives evidence to the expressivist belief "that voice empowers individuals to act in the world" (Burnham 23). I used written emotional expression to move beyond a self-created isolation that prevented me from engaging with and participating in the activities of the people and world around me. This isolation kept me from growing emotionally and intellectually and from understanding the relationship between others and writing and myself helped me integrate my experience with the experience(s) and knowledge of society. The result was that I created a self that could function more holistically and purposefully in my community.

The process of writing a "list" poem enables writers who are seeking the healing benefits of writing to compile a list that can be examined for reoccurring themes or ideas that can be further developed. Just as students are asked to search their pre-writing and brainstorming exercises for possible essay material, writers in a therapeutic writing group look over their list for a feeling or experience that they want to delve into more deeply. Each therapeutic writing group session usually contains two to three writing exercises. The initial "list" poem prompt provides material for the next exercise. The next exercise asks writers to choose one line from the newly created poem and then analyze and develop the ideas contained in the chosen line in a more focused piece of writing (Bray *When Words Heal* 29-30). For example, Bray presents the work of a member in one of her therapeutic writing groups who began to create a narrative about her surgery as an extension of one of the lines she wrote in her list poem (*When Words Heal* 30-31). In a

similar manner I used a prompt about the physical and emotional scarring of cancer to create a narrative about how I responded to the comments of others regarding my situation just as Bray's group member wrote a story describing the fear she felt about surgery. Both of these examples are common types of writing exercises that evolve from a brainstorming activity such as the "list" poem. The narratives created in these writing exercises provide material for further expansion and revision and writers in a therapeutic writing group imitate the writing process often found in first-year composition classrooms. They create a first draft, organize their thoughts, and strive for clarity as they transform experience and/or knowledge into language.

The drafting phase of the writing process, common to both therapeutic writing and some composition pedagogies, is "rough, searching, unfinished" but provides writers (either student or therapeutic) a more solid, concrete basis from which to continue their written exploration of the topic (Murray "Teaching Writing as a Process Not Product" 4). I have used the analogy with students and other writers that the first draft resembles a lump of clay that now must be fashioned into a discernable piece of art. Writers must work with and shape the written words in this phase of the process into a coherent piece that reflects their intended meaning. The first draft or the first narratives generated in a therapeutic writing group are the sites where writers struggle to communicate thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively.

This transformation to cohesion and clarity takes place in the final writing phase. The final part of the therapeutic writing exercise that started with the "list" poem instructs group participants to continue to revise or re-see the experience they have chosen by continuing to refine the writing and their thoughts and feelings. Students are often told

that good writing is in the re-writing, so revision offers them a way to clarify thinking, focus thesis statements, and organize supporting evidence. In both cases, several drafts may be required before a piece of writing is considered "finished."

As writers in a therapeutic writing group continue to work on their piece, the writing becomes more coherent and concise. Writing as healing not only adheres closely to Murray's model of the writing process where writing is not only seen as an act of discovery through language, but it also provides a way for writers to examine what is felt and known in order to learn more about the world around them and themselves ("Teaching Writing as a Process Not Product" 4). As writers become adept at determining which details of their experience are most important to their understanding of the experience/feelings, this understanding leads to adjustments in behavior when faced with new events and ideas (Pennebaker, "Health Benefits" 11). Similarly, the rewriting process that student writers engage in involves a "reconsideration of subject, form, [and] audience" that results in a well-developed, well-supported thesis that is clear and well organized (Murray "Teaching Writing as a Process Not Product" 4). Consequently, this last phase of the writing process or revision leads writers in more clearly defined directions and results in a different conclusion or new understanding as they work through the process. Like some composition classes at the university level, many therapeutic writing groups publish anthologies of their work (at least for the benefit of group and/or family members), which provides even more motivation to strive for improved narrative cohesion and style just as student writers are encouraged to revise their essays in order to advance their skills and improve their grade. Therefore, the struggle for narrative coherence is both psychologically and academically beneficial.

The Act of (Self) Discovery and Learning

Just as the therapeutic writing group model mimics the writing process often taught in first-year composition, it also encourages writers to reflect on, analyze, and interpret both internally (personally) and externally (socially) constructed knowledge. Writing that performs these functions of reflection, analysis, and interpretation is used as the basis for synthesizing the internal/personal with the external/social in order to form conclusions or arrive at insight. The result of this type of writing is self-discovery and acquisition of new knowledge. The inclusive and empathic group/classroom setting advocated by both the therapeutic writing model and the pedagogies mentioned above are the prerequisite for the kind of self-discovery and learning that takes place through reflective writing practices. In both settings, exploration and insight into personal experience (through writing) enhances the learning process and transfers the newly acquired knowledge or insight to larger social, cultural and political contexts.

Pennebaker's research shows that emotionally expressive writing allows individuals to understand their feelings concerning particular experiences as they continue to move their writing toward a more coherent and concise narrative (*Opening Up* 103). Many composition teachers use the personal narrative as an introductory writing assignment that enables them to teach other conventions of expository writing such as analysis, synthesis, and persuasion. Students learn to write academically by first learning to write personally. Therapeutic writers learn about themselves and their role within the community through the physical act of putting feelings or experiences into

words that can lead to new insights regarding experiences and ultimately engage healing (physical and/or psychological).

Although most composition scholars who espouse an expressivist, feminist, collaborative, or process point of view do not put much emphasis on the kind of healing Pennebaker's research illustrates, expressivist, feminist, collaborative, and process pedagogies view writing as a "process of discovery through language" to explore both the known and unknown (Murray, "Teaching Writing as a Process" 4). The "known" is the writer's internal, personal knowledge relating to an experience, and the unknown represents the societal, cultural, or community context in which that personal knowledge exists. Writing helps the individual make connections between the two (known/internal, unknown/eternal) and assists him/her in establishing "conceptual relationships" that promote (self) discovery and learning (Emig 12).

These intersections and subsequent interactions between internal/external and private/public can be exemplified through my own experience participating in a therapeutic writing group for breast cancer survivors. At one of the initial meetings of my group, the following prompt was issued as a way to uncover feelings associated with the disfigurement that is often a part of breast cancer: " write about a scar that you have." I wrote of angry, red scars and radiation charred skin and filled the page with rage against the banal comments of others:

> I will not pretend. I will not smile and nod when people say stupid things to me: "you're strong, you will survive", "God has something good in store for you…" They will hear the truth about how I feel, all the anger, all the bitterness, the sadness, the confusion…

It may appear from this excerpt from my therapeutic writing notebook that the writing done in these groups is self-indulgent and closed to outside scrutiny since my words do not invite alternative viewpoints and seem to indicate an inability (or unwillingness) to consider either others or the outside world. My writing was in fact initially self-indulgent, but as my time in the writing group continued and I heard and learned about the experiences and feelings of others, my focus turned away from myself and toward more societal and cultural issues. Although anger is a normal primary response to a cancer diagnosis, the new knowledge I acquired through my fellow survivors' perspectives pushed me to re-evaluate the usefulness of this response both to myself and to my community. I began to challenge societal and cultural norms by struggling with questions about my worth as a "sick" person in a society that places a premium on health and gender/sexuality issues surrounding being a woman without (natural) breasts.

The collaborative atmosphere of my writing group and the safe environment that had been created helped me move past potentially crippling emotions. By engaging language to explore not only how I felt about my situation but also how "I" now fit contextually within society (in a new and different way), I was able to "experiment symbolically (through language) in order to gauge just what might work in various situations" (Warnock 46). In other words, I could analyze, think critically, assimilate new information, and finally reconstruct my place in society and myself in collaboration with others in my group. This process of self discovery and grappling with a culturally predetermined sense of identity is the basis of both expresssivist and feminist pedagogies where writing is positioned as a way to explore not only what we know and feel but also how society influences those perceptions (Murray 4; Jarratt 118). Expressivist and

feminist assignments that prompt students to write about a personal encounter with racism or sexism allow writers to examine their individual responses to the event and raise questions about how their experience fits into social or cultural expectations as the class discusses such issues together.

While it may appear that only self-discovery is taking place through the emotive quality of therapeutic writing, the writing itself provides what Janet Emig calls a "mode of learning." Emig talks about writing as heuristic, and my therapeutic/reflective writing regarding my breast cancer bears this out (7). The (symbolic) exploration of my experience through language led me to new understandings about myself and a different view of the world around me—I learned new ways of thinking and interacting. I was able to acquire this new knowledge because written language is accessible and the process of writing mimics the process of learning (7). Summarizing Jerome Bruner and Jean Piaget, Emig recognizes this phenomenon as a learning technique that utilizes the representational quality of language as a means to "re-organize… a cognitive scheme in light of an experience" (10). This reorganization took place because I could actually transfer my experience from the abstract to the concrete through writing and allowed me "real" words/ideas to manipulate (or re-organize).

I used writing and the collaboration of the group setting to re-think, re-evaluate, and re-organize my thoughts concerning my new identity as a cancer survivor and acquired new knowledge regarding about both self and world. Writing achieves such learning, according to Emig, because it enables the writer to analyze old and new material, utilize both right and left brain functions, and synthesize all of these elements to reach "fresh arrangements or amalgams" (11, 13). In my case, writing about my anger

and bitterness exposed it so that I could examine it and decide if that was how I wanted to proceed in this area of my life. The therapeutic writing I engaged in gave me the chance to evaluate the effectiveness of this frame of mind in achieving my goals as a survivor. Therapeutic writing enabled me to take advantage of the "unique form of feedback … [which] exists with writing" (Emig 11). I could review my own work (both written and experiential), and make adjustments (or revisions) until I created an image (of myself, my life) more to my liking.

Additionally, listening and/or conversing with others in my group offered me different perspectives to consider or analyze. I held these different ways of viewing my circumstances and the world up against my own and continued the synthesis process (between my internal knowledge/reality and the external knowledge/perspectives of others) until I arrived at some conclusions. To reach these conclusions, I had to synthesize my thoughts/ideas/values in alignment with the new ones I deemed worthy of adopting. In short, my therapeutic writing taught me new ways of thinking through the exercise of analyzing both private and public knowledge, and synthesizing the two to create another base of knowledge from which I could then move forward. And my writing process followed the basic steps that occur in learning: I achieved a new understanding of the material as I worked with it, I integrated that material into what I already knew; I practiced the new ideas in collaboration with others; and I finally mastered a new skill (to live wholly and authentically as a survivor). This process also occurs in composition classrooms where students are encouraged to interact with others whose life experiences are different from their own in an environment that supports the validity of all perspectives. The goal for such a classroom is to create more socially

aware and integrated citizens who can respectfully participate in the discourse of society, and this occurs through a process of self-discovery and learning.

Shared Practices, Shared Beliefs

The therapeutic writing exercises presented exemplify the features shared by this model and expressivist, feminist, collaborative, and process pedagogies. Elbow is credited with the application of freewriting as a technique that aids in the invention of ideas and as a cure for "writer's block" (*Writing Without Teachers* 3-5) and many therapeutic writing prompts encourage freewriting or journaling about a prompt in an attempt to discover previously repressed feelings about an event or experience (Pennebaker 189-190, DeSalvo 85-86). Expressivist and feminist classrooms and therapeutic writing groups use reflective writing to process and refine a piece of freewriting and employ the group (or class) in a collaborative effort to provide feedback and promote clarity in the writing (Elbow 93-94, Bray *When Words Heal* 9-10). The techniques used by expressivist, feminist, and collaborative teachers of composition and therapeutic writers privilege the writer and her/his writing in a supportive environment that fosters emotional/psychological growth and development to the extent that a more integrated self emerges: a person who is better able to participate, interact, and influence his/her community while gaining a greater degree of self knowledge and knowledge of writing.

This examination of common therapeutic writing exercises highlights the practices shared by both therapeutic writing and several important composition pedagogies. It is clear the therapeutic writing movement shares several composing and

pedagogical strategies with composition studies, and practitioners believe that these strategies promote the stated goals of improved physical and psychological health. Therapeutic writing's focus on the writing process also speaks to the essential belief that all individuals' texts, whether spoken or written, are worthy of the attention required to produce a unique, creative work. However, it is these shared attributes that are also cause for concern among composition scholars who are wary of using emotionally expressive writing in the classroom. In the next chapter, I will look closely at the arguments against situating this type of writing in composition classrooms, and I will provide my own argument for composition classrooms informed by the research about and the practices of therapeutic writing.

Chapter 3

Criticisms and Critiques of Personal and Emotionally Expressive Writing

In this chapter I will examine the arguments against situating the personal essay and elements of the therapeutic writing model in first-year composition. Instructors' concerns with emotion-based and emotionally expressive writing in the academy are these: the value of this type of writing in teaching academic discourse, concerns about what texts are/should be privileged, the risks associated with student self-disclosure, and the perceived difficulties of evaluating this type of student writing. To be clear, I am not advocating the exclusive use of therapeutic writing tenets or personal writing principles in writing classrooms. Rather, by tying the applicable research results from Chapter 1 to the pedagogical theories examined in Chapter 2, I offer a new and viable way to implement emotionally expressive writing in first-year composition in order to engage students in the writing process, foster critical thinking skills, and provide a bridge to more conventional forms of academic writing. My proposed pedagogy is not exclusionary, but it seeks to weave emotion into the already existing framework of sound composition pedagogy. Encouraging students to analyze both personal and social issues through the lens of emotion can lead to the very outcomes that proponents of social constructionist, cultural studies, current traditional, and critical theories desire.

Academic Discourse

Scholars such as James Berlin and David Bartholomae take the view that personal writing, which constitutes the basis of the therapeutic writing model, is in conflict with the goals of first-year composition and initiation into academic discourse. Those who espouse these pedagogies feel the personal essay does not teach students to participate in or emulate the discourse of the academy (Bartholomae 628). According to this view, academic discourse represents the logical examination and analysis of texts that reflect the discourse of society (Haefner 515), and personal writing, which sometimes includes self-disclosure of emotionally sensitive issues, is sometimes considered "weak, shallow, petty, vain, and narcissistic" rather than intellectual (Micciche 2). For example, Rebecca Williams Mlynarczyk, in her article "Personal and Academic Writing: Revisiting the Debate," illustrates the difference between personal and academic writing with the following example: A student might reflect on his/her parent's divorce in a personal essay but "argu[e] to end the system of no-fault divorce" in an academic essay (5). From the point of view of some teacher-scholars, the former does nothing to rationally examine the implications and/or consequences of how divorce is constructed in society, but the latter is more concerned with the individual's response.

Opponents of this type of emotional discourse view it as counterproductive to the goals of the academy, which are to facilitate learning and critical analysis of various disciplines in order to prepare students for future academic endeavors and professional life while molding responsible citizens who positively contribute to a democratic society. The purpose of academic discourse, and therefore writing, is to involve students in analysis and critique of the values, norms, and mores of society (Berlin qtd. in George

and Trimbur 80). According to Marshall Alcorn, in his book *Changing the Subject in English Class: Discourse and the Constructions of Desire,* such pedagogies seek to produce students who are more politically responsible by teaching them to engage in the dialogue of society (1). Proponents of this view argue that students need to learn the discourse of the academy in order to become social participants.

I agree with the desire of the academy to teach students the tools necessary to engage in thoughtful analysis of the world around them. And I agree that the traditional conventions of academic discourse will ultimately be valuable to students as they progress in the academy and beyond. However, while it is important for students to learn to communicate their thoughts clearly and to articulate well-supported arguments, the focus should be on teaching writing that achieves these communication goals rather than on one specific type of writing, such as academic discourse. This exclusive emphasis on academic discourse implies a particular ideological approach to the teaching of composition.

As Berlin points out, rhetoric and ideology have always been closely linked ("Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class"). It is not uncommon for composition classrooms to have an ideological agenda or theme as evidenced by teachers' choice of readings or topics. Ideology surfaces in these ways either intentionally or unintentionally because ideology reflects personal values and assumptions about society. When ideology dominates the composition classroom at the expense of teaching writing, problems arise. The subject of the composition classroom should be just that—composition and "how one uses it to learn and think and communicate" because it is the critical thinking process of writing that enables students to examine their own ideology, explore the ideology of

others, and communicate that ideology effectively (Hairston 697). Rhetoric and ideology are closely linked as a function of the emotional bonds that exist between ideas and people and personal and emotionally expressive writing can help students communicate their ideas more effectively because when students write about "something they care about and want to know more about," they will learn to use language in ways that alter outcomes that are meaningful to them (Hairston 708).

These outcomes may eventually affect society. Emotion can be a useful tool in teaching students to engage specific audiences for specific purposes when the focus is on improving those writing skills that will achieve their goal. Student-writers need to know how to analyze another position or present a supported argument for their position whether they are writing for the academy or professional or personal endeavors. Since it is impossible to conduct a value-free class, focusing on writing skills such as organization of thought, clarity of language, and use of rhetorical devices in the expression of an ideology offers a conciliatory bridge between rhetoric and ideology and can potentially result in the kind of social change some pedagogies seek.

Personal writing that is emotionally based can create social or cultural change because emotion is the rhetoric of both personal and social discourse. Emotions have this power because, as Aristotle wrote, emotions are "those things through which, by undergoing change, people come to differ in their judgments" (qtd. in Micciche 11). Laura Micciche uses Aristotle's idea as the basis for her book *Doing Emotion: Rhetoric, Writing, Teaching.* Rather than being static and enslaving, emotions, as Micciche sees it, are dynamic, rhetorical strategies that enable writers to move in different directions from the one previously held. Emotions act, they do, they motivate; emotions empower

instead of leaving writers powerless. And they are "rhetorical activities because they have to do with consequences and effects, interpretation and judgment, change and movement" (Micciche 14). I agree with Micciche that emotionally expressive personal and academic writing can engender both personal and social change as writers use the performative aspect of emotions to reflect on and analyze experiences within a social context.

Emotions also connect writers to their audience. Aristotle's presentation of *pathos* involves not only emotions but also the values, beliefs, and assumptions of the audience as well as the writer. The effective rhetorician is one who can persuade his/her listeners by establishing an emotional connection between them and the topic. For example, politicians routinely try to evoke fear in their constituents when proposing a new agenda or program by predicting unknown consequences should the measure fail to pass. And their constituents respond to that fear based on their particular beliefs about the issue in question.

Similarly, external texts elicit emotional responses in readers as a result of readers' own values, beliefs, and assumptions about the subject matter. Reading Margaret Atwood's "Happy Endings" may cause a student with strong religious convictions about marriage to be angry because of the flippant tone of the piece while a student scarred by her/his parents divorce may resonate with Atwood's disdain for the institution of marriage as conceived by society. Both of these emotional reactions are predicated on the individual student's belief system, allude to different worldviews and would lead to argumentative papers from differing positions with entirely different thesis statements. The link between emotions and values, beliefs, and assumptions position emotion as both

worthy of analysis in college composition and useful in analyzing responses to outside sources in academic, professional, and personal settings.

The connectivity of emotion is the main focus of Micciche's concept of emotion "as a category of analysis." Micciche claims that emotion's rhetorical power rests not in viewing it as a reaction to something but as a way writers form attachments to "others, to world-views, and a whole array of sources and objects" (1). In other words, emotions are relational, by establishing associations between self and the outside world. I think of it this way: We like/dislike, agree/disagree with others or their points of view largely because we have some emotional investment in the issue or subject. For example, I disagree (and will argue against) the new government guidelines pushing the minimum age for screening mammograms from 40 to 50 because I have an emotional investment in this particular issue. I and others I know are alive today because I received a pre-50 screening mammogram that detected early stage breast cancer. If I were to write a paper about this topic, my emotional investment would motivate me to research evidence to support my claim that raising the screening age from 40 to 50 may lead to premature deaths from breast cancer. In this example, I use my emotions surrounding the issue to facilitate inquiry and develop a thesis or claim regarding it. This illustrates the use of emotion "as a category of analysis" and how it can be useful for first-year composition. When students react emotionally to an issue presented in class/readings it signifies an issue that is meaningful and important to them. Rather than allowing the emotional response to become blinding and potentially prevent further exploration, it can be channeled through the critical thinking process that writing involves to examine the relationship between writers and issues and arrive at either a well-supported argument for

the original opinion or a re-evaluation of that position that leads to new insights and conclusions.

New insights and conclusions are the basis of meaning making and knowledge in larger contexts. Therefore, the sustained use of emotion in composition classrooms has social implications. Tim Barnett's article "Politicizing the Personal: Fredrick Douglass, Richard Wright and Some Thoughts on the Limits of Critical Literacy" illustrates the connections between emotion, meaning making, and knowledge in a social context. Barnett examines the relationship between emotionally charged personal writing and social critique in the composition classroom. His exploration of the "dichotomy between personal writing and social critique" is a thoughtful reflection on the power of emotion to facilitate personal and social change. Barnett's article also raises several questions regarding the ethics of evoking an emotional response in students' writing (356). On the one hand, Barnett is uncomfortable with situating personal writing in composition, yet he relates an example of how personal writing enhanced the critical thinking and writing skills of one of his students and I will return to his misgivings in the next section.

Interestingly, Barnett also makes a strong case for dissolving the "dichotomy between personal writing and social critique" when he compares his student's essay with the Douglass and Wright narratives in an effort to illustrate how painful emotions in writing not only critique the values and norms of society but also lead to powerful personal, social, and political change. His assertion that Douglass and Wright (and his student) needed emotion to reconstruct themselves through their writing in order to transform their social situations echoes Pennebaker's findings that emotional written expression promotes psychological health in relation to social or community context

(357). Barnett's use of the Douglass and Wright's narratives highlight the role emotions can play in entering into and creating social discourse. It was the "emotional intensity" that the men experienced through their writing that helped them to "critically analyze themselves in relation to [the] world" (360). Just as my deeply emotional experience of cancer led me to re-evaluate my place within my community and Barnett's student wrestled with the consequences of sexual abuse, the (emotional) experience of slavery and racism caused Douglass and Wright to question their status and leave an indelible mark on American society (375). In this way, personal and emotional writing is not counter to the aims of the social constructivist or cultural studies approach, but it can be a viable way for students to enter into academic discourse.

Student Texts vs. External Texts—What Should Students Write About?

Barnett's article also brings up the subject of what writing topics and strategies are best suited for students to engage in the work of the academy. He expresses concern about the negative effects of writing about emotion, citing Douglass' contemplation of suicide and Wright's depression (361-362). The Douglass and Wright narratives not only exemplify the degree to which emotionally expressive writing can destabilize writers but also are examples of texts that could elicit powerful emotional reactions in students. While Berlin does not address the potentially serious consequences of emotionally expressive writing, he also is apprehensive of the expressivist emphasis on students' texts over outside texts. He believes that privileging students' texts will encourage a "romantic individuality" and an ideology that "serve[s] specific kinds of economic, social, and political behavior that works to the advantage of the members of one social class while

disempowering others" (Barnett 357; Berlin "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class" 735). From this point of view, when students are allowed to write about themselves and their experiences, it can lead to a sense of individualism that is not conducive to the social justice aims of a democratic society. Additionally, Barnett worries that students will be physically or psychologically at risk. In this section I address these social concerns and the risks of self-disclosure.

The concern about student texts is grounded in the belief that knowledge is socially constructed. The social constructionist argument that privileges academic discourse over personal discourse is based on the idea that personal writing does not facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and this pedagogical model positions knowledge and truth as being defined and determined by the culture or society. According to this pedagogy, students need to examine and analyze the texts that have produced this knowledge in order to engage in the social conversation regarding such knowledge or truth. Berlin speaks to this issue in his lengthy discussion of the expressivist view of truth "[as] conceived as the result of a private vision that must be constantly consulted in writing" in contrast to an empirical truth that can only be achieved by human interaction with the external world, or socially (262). Social constructionists, like Berlin, believe that because private truth is experientially based it tends to isolate the individual from society, and it does not facilitate "interaction with the external world" (262). The focus on students' texts also does not lend itself to learning the discourse of the academy whose objective is to promote the needs of a progressive democratic society. Additionally, students need to become proficient in academic discourse to be academically successful.

According to Berlin's ideas and those of other social constructivists, the use of outside texts, rather than student generated texts also help students learn the discourse of the academy. Academic discourse and teaching students to adequately participate in it are often primary concerns of the first-year composition class. For example, Holly Hassel and Joanne Baird Giordano, in their article "Transfer Institutions, Transfer of Knowledge: The Development of Rhetorical and Underprepared Writers" speak to this issue of students' proficiency in academic discourse. They argue that basic writers in community college transfer programs (to four year universities) seem unable to analyze anything beyond the personal (30). The authors' study of basic writers at a community college suggests a need to teach writing skills that will help students succeed at the four-year university level. As a result, these scholars take the position that introductory writing courses should focus on "text-based writing assignments" to ensure students' proper development in the type of academic discourse that they will encounter in the four year university (26). They maintain that their study shows that "text-based writing assignments in introductory writing courses play a crucial role in preparing students for more advanced coursework, both in English and in other disciplines" (37). Hassel and Giordano's conclusions echo the common notion that first-year writing students must be taught to "invent the university," to use Bartholomae's often quoted phrase, or learn to emulate its discourse in order to be successful.

In contrast, I maintain that the issue of what texts are used in first-year composition is not an either/or matter, but one that encompasses both writing about personal experiences and writing that is prompted by external texts. Often the two are intertwined. The example of the therapeutic writing exercise presented in Chapter 2 used

the Raymond Carver poem "Fear" to elicit the writing response. Many composition teachers ask students to respond to a reading with a personal reflection essay, such as Barnett's use of Sapphire's *Push* or Jeffrey Berman's use of stories about suicide (Barnett 372; Berman *Risky Writing*). Texts such as these and many others can generate emotional responses in students that can then be material for further personal reflection. The goal of using this kind of reading assignments is to situate students' responses within a cultural or social context.

Situating the personal in the social can influence both because as Marshal Alcorn explains, "political ideas will never be right until there is attention to and freedom in self-expression" (3). Whether students write about personal experience in response to a reading or a writing assignment prompt, emotional written expression can create a culturally inclusive class since students, as Hairston relates, bring "a picture of the world in his or her mind that is constructed out of his or her cultural background" (710). Through the use of personal writing or writing that focuses on emotions, student-writers can analyze and critique themselves so that they are able, from the strength of the conclusions born of that analysis, analyze and critique the world in which we live. Just as the foregrounding of personal, cultural, and political voice brought about a change in the socio-political climate of the 1960s and 1970s, attention to personal emotional expression through writing in first-year composition may result in students who, through the changes they personally experience, will contribute to the evolving landscape of academic discourse by being able to more fully participate in it.

In a similar manner to how Douglass and Wright's exploration of the emotions they felt as a result of racism propelled them to act in ways that changed society, when

students deal with personally relevant emotions in writing, they may be better able to enter into dialogue about the social implications and consequences of their feelings. This is the performative, motivating aspect of emotion that Micciche refers to; emotion "results in individual change…as well as move[s] [us] toward significant public engagement" because it helps us analyze where we are and where we need to be (Barnett 372). Micciche's concept of performativity situates emotion as a force that acts upon us cognitively to empower us to reach new conclusions about the world and ourselves (47). Berlin may be right about the ideological component of writing, but the necessary conclusion of this thought does not have to exclude the potential social ramifications of personal and emotionally expressive writing (Berman 24). Writing that uses emotion does not necessarily leave out critical thinking about forces in the world around us.

Classroom Considerations of Self-Disclosure

While emotionally expressive writing may be beneficial for the psychological and academic development of students as Pennebaker's research reveals, it does pose some problems. Emotionally expressive writing, as the term implies, has the potential to unleash powerful, sometimes debilitating feelings in students. Writing prompts such as "write about a childhood event that changed your life," or readings that deal with emotionally sensitive subjects such as sexual abuse can lead to student self-disclosure. The feelings and subject matter that surface in personal writing may make the teacher uncomfortable and put the student at psychological risk. This situation causes much concern for Barnett and many other composition teachers. Stating that he has not yet resolved the issue, Barnett uses the intense emotional written responses of Douglass,

Wright, and his student to question what role teachers should take in treating "students as whole human beings with emotions and powerful experiences" (358). Barnett points to Douglass' written contemplation of suicide, Wright's "dream of terror," and his student's advice to discontinue his use of Sapphire's *Push* as a writing prompt to ponder the ethics of requiring students to write about potentially disabling emotions and experiences.

Contrary to Barnett's point of view, Jeffrey Berman actively seeks self-disclosure from his students. His composition courses focus on the personal and cultural implications of suicide, and he admits that such writing is risky—the name of his book is *Risky Writing.* He cautions "teachers who encourage their students to write about personal subjects must be able to understand and respond to [the] darkest of emotions" (21). Even so, Berman is adamant that writing teachers not assume the role of psychotherapist, but he also believes that "teachers can be caring without becoming care givers" (58). He outlines in his book very specific criteria for dealing with sensitive subject matter and potentially destabilized students. Berman's ideas are worth noting because not only are they solid strategies for dealing with extreme emotions, but he offers general principles that can be effective with any type of personal writing.

Berman's first rule for teachers who encounter (either willingly or not) emotionally charged content in student writing is to understand their role and the limitations inherent in that role. The teacher's primary job is to teach writing, not help students overcome psychological problems. Understanding and observing the boundaries that exist between students and teachers is also a "rejection of omnipotence and omniscience" (38). This idea aligns well with the role of the teacher as guide, coach, and encourager—not a solver of personal problems. In an effort to protect both students and

teachers, Berman suggests offering a "non-risky" alternative to assignments that may evoke strong emotional responses. Students should also have the option to participate in in-class readings and the option to remain anonymous if their essay is read out loud. Teachers should, according to Berman, make themselves available to students with dependable office hours and regular conferences. Should a student present a volatile topic to the instructor, one way Berman suggests to diffuse the desire to self-disclose is to ask the student to anticipate the response of her/his classmates with the hope that this will cause the student to consider her/his audience and their reaction to the disclosure. Finally, teachers should be well acquainted with their schools mental health services and know how and when to make a referral to the appropriate services in the event a student is perceived to be at risk (38-45).

Berman's guidelines for teachers' responses to written student self-disclosure are helpful in any composition classroom because whether the disclosure is intentionally sought or not, sometimes emotions and personal issues will find their way into writing classrooms. It is impossible to completely separate emotions from the life of students in first-year composition. While Berman's guidelines are practical solutions for teachers when they encounter uncomfortable emotions or self-disclosure in student writing, personal writing does not have to elicit powerful and dangerous emotions to be beneficial. I admit that personal writing that results in personal or social change will probably be writing that challenges the student/writer to critically explore and analyze emotional reactions to certain situations, such as abuse, racism, or disease/disability. Emotion is a "category of analysis" according to Micciche, because it works at a personal level, creating an individual who is more emotionally (and physically) stable and in tune

with his/her community, as Pennebaker's research shows (1). Emotion works as a "category of analysis" through writing because an individual who is not at peace with him/herself cannot begin to make peace or interact with others. It is interacting with others, collaborating on problems/issues, and exchanging ideas that help students (or anyone) learn and grow and develop. And it is through these processes of interaction, collaboration, and dialogue that students participate in academic and social discourse for the improvement of both.

While the kind of personal writing that creates improvement in writing or academic discourse is hard work, it does not have to be centered on negative emotion. The Burton and King study presented in Chapter 1 reveals the benefits of positive emotionally expressive writing. One of Pennebaker's studies shows that students who wrote how they felt about difficult course material improved their grades and class participation level. Both of these studies support Micciche's concept of the analytical quality of emotion. Whether relating a positive experience or expressing confusion about new ideas and information, emotions played a role in assessing, interpreting, and assimilating the data surrounding the experience. Emotions helped students through an intellectual process as well as an experiential one.

As Micciche states, our first reaction to the concept of emotion in writing is usually negative due the stigma that feminizes emotion and views it as anti-intellectual (16). If we can see emotion as constructive rather than destructive in terms of learning to write and engage in academic and social discourse, then we can begin to position it to our advantage in first-year composition. Certainly there are possible ethical problems associated with privileging emotion in the writing classroom, and we need to be aware of

the potential risks and respond accordingly, as Berman suggests. However, I believe we can minimize the risks inherent in student self-disclosure when we situate emotion in positive ways and use positive (or at least not extremely negative ones) emotions to accomplish our writing and academic goals.

Evaluating Emotionally Expressive Writing

When students are allowed to determine their own topics for writing assignments, as Hairston and Murray suggest, or are encouraged to explore their own experience through writing (Allen, Berman, MacCurdy), the potential for volatile emotions exists, as discussed in the last section. Regardless of the emotional content, college composition requires evaluation of writing skills. I agree with Thomas Newkirk that "writing situations can be therapeutic because we *don't* (*italics mine*) act as therapists…[T]he therapeutic power of such writing may be the experience of having it treated as "normal"—that is, writing that can be responded to, critiqued, even graded" (qtd. in Paley 204). However, grading or evaluating such writing not only makes teachers uncomfortable, but teachers also might be unwilling to make what may be perceived as value judgments of another person's lived experience. As Barnett states, "we rightfully feel a need to respect the idea of the private self that has been ingrained in all of us, especially since that is the sense of self most students bring to the classroom" (358). Most teachers are not interested in discrediting the value of lived experience in students' lives. They are concerned with the best way to teach writing. Therefore, teaching basic composition conventions such as analysis or argumentation give teachers clear learning objectives by which to assign a grade to an essay. To some, narrative-based, reflective,

or emotionally expressive writing poses an evaluation problem because there is no set form that is consistently followed by writers, teachers, or pedagogical theory.

In addition to this lack of basic criteria, I think there is a misperception that because personal writing does not have a standard form it has no quantifiable qualities. Many teachers think personal writing is a type of creative writing and as such is hard to grade. However, creative writing is gradable in creative writing classes because each assignment carries with it a specific learning objective such as effective use of dialogue or descriptive language. Personal writing is not the same as creative writing, but a similar strategy can be used in regard to grading. The key to grading personal writing is to incorporate learning objectives into each assignment and use the objectives as the basis of evaluation. Molly Moran, in her article "Toward a Writing and Healing Approach in the Basic Writing Classroom: One Professor's Personal Odyssey," outlines how she grades the personal essays she assigns her basic writers: "An essay's grade is based on content (i.e. substance, development, and support), coherence (organization and clarity), and adherence to grammar and mechanics conventions" (112). Additionally, teachers can require other specific objectives be met in the writing assignment such as attention to detail, reflection, analysis, or synthesis. For example, Moran assigns her students a "thesis-supported essay in which [they] connect a personal issue or experience to a generalization about life or American society" (108). When the objectives for the assignment are clear, the student will have guidelines around which to craft his/her essay, and the teacher will have a rubric and/or clear grading criteria upon which to base a grade.

In addition to giving students clear guidelines and criteria for each assignment and grading the final draft based on whether those objectives are met, there are other grading strategies useful for the evaluation of personal writing. Some, like Moran, reserve grading until the end of the semester when a portfolio of work is turned in (106). The idea here is to provide feedback for improvement of writing skills throughout the semester without attaching a grade to the work, so students' focus on writing rather than on grades. The grade on the portfolio reflects the degree to which the student has accomplished the writing tasks assigned and mastered the skills the assignments were designed to teach. This is similar to the way creative writing is graded in the academy and does have the advantage of focusing the writer on the writing itself (Moffitt).

Other strategies of grading personal writing include a pass/fail and a "soft-grading" system (Harris 198). Jeffrey Berman uses a pass/fail grading system to avoid the potential problem of students perceiving a grade as evaluative of their personal experience. In fact, all of the writing courses taught at Berman's university (University of Albany) institute the pass/fail system of grading, so he suggests that teachers who are required to post grades in writing courses use the pass/fail method only on emotionally expressive writing (41). Another way to circumvent students' perception that the experience rather than the writing is being evaluated is through the grading method that Judith Harris advocates. Harris contends "[g]rading is always an imperfect system and should be reinforced by a teacher's continuing prodding of the student's intention—either in conference or along the borders of the paper itself" (198). Harris uses what she calls a "soft-grading" method involving checks and check minuses along with dialogic feedback in the paper's margins. These strategies are intended to focus the writer's attention on

specific elements or skills of writing and to provide collaborative interaction that will facilitate the writer's analysis and critique of her/his own ideas.

Strategies that help writers to improve are necessary because attention to the development of writing skills is as important for personal writing as expository writing. Some composition scholars such as Marian MacCurdy maintain that the personal essay is a unique art form and should be treated as such by teachers who are committed to learning the craft that defines the form (191). Contrary to this view, I take the stance (as does Moran) that the personal essay should be held to the same standards of grading as an expository essay. This is especially true if the personal essay is viewed as a bridge to the expository or argumentative forms of writing. There are multiple options in regard to evaluating the personal essay, but I believe that grading is necessary not only for the advancement of writing skills but also critical thinking skills. Grading challenges students to continually examine what they think, why they think this, and how it fits with other ways of thinking.

The key, in terms of writing that has emotional content, is to separate the writer from the writing, or grade the paper not the person. This is not an easy task. Jerome Bump, in "Teaching Emotional Literacy," voices the concern of many writing teachers who incorporate personal writing into their classes and admits that he doesn't know how to deal with the grading issue perfectly, but he distinguishes self-disclosure from the writing task. Bump believes that the degree to which a student self-discloses or emotes through a written assignment should never be graded whether it is part of the assignment or not, so he tries to grade his students' personal essays "on how much work they put into [it], not what personal changes, if any, result" (330). Just as Barnett sees the value of

written emotional expression but questions the ethics of situating it in composition classrooms, Bump is committed to using the personal essay in spite of his reservations about grading. The best answer I can give for this dilemma is for teachers who want to pursue the use of emotionally expressive writing to be aware of the risks involved, pre-determine strategies to attenuate those risks, strive for assignments with clear objectives, and grade on Moran's criteria of content, coherence, and grammatical/mechanical form (112). Regardless of the emotional content, the writing must be evaluated, and these strategies may be the best defense against evaluating students' lives and experiences rather than their writing.

A New Perspective on Emotion and Composition

Emotionally expressive writing is a vehicle for change, personally and socially, and as a result it is instrumental in creating knowledge, both private and public. Individuals who live and have experiences in the larger society influence the historical, social, and cultural context of this knowledge. Emotion plays a key role in this process. According to Micciche, emotion is the glue or "stickiness" that generates attachments to others, to world-views, and to a whole array of sources and objects" (1). In other words, personal or emotionally expressive writing can engender change because emotions are not merely a subjective quality of existence but are something that individuals enact as a means or "category of analysis" (1). Emotions are useful for making meaning and acquiring knowledge. The challenge is, of course, how do we, as teachers, facilitate that knowledge and by what means should we do so. If we believe that writing constitutes a "mode" of learning (Emig), a way of discovering one's thoughts (Murray), a way for

individuals to interact with social/cultural concepts (Barnett), then writing focused on what students want (or need) to write about should hold a coveted place in composition classrooms.

The crux of the matter is how to teach writing in such a way that students will come to see writing as more than trying to please the teacher and get a (good) grade (Allen 251). As writing teachers, we want students to come to understand how writing can be part of their lives—that writing as a life-long pursuit can be instrumental in shaping who they are, how they respond to the world, and how they contribute to its continuance. Pennebaker's research exemplifies Micciche's concept of "emotion as a category of analysis," and she argues that emotion is not simply something that happens to us, but rather it is an active component of the rhetorical work of interpreting and analyzing ourselves and our surroundings (1-2). The subjects of Pennebaker's various studies showed improvement in physical, psychological, behavioral, and academic indicators as a function of the analytic processing of emotion through writing (Chapter 1).

The findings of Pennebaker and others, coupled with how the brain works and uses emotion, give evidence of the ability of emotion to stimulate the cognitive processes required to synthesize fragmented thoughts and ideas, analyze experience, and interpret that experience against the backdrop of society/culture/community. Micciche's "emotion as a category of analysis" involves the written expression of emotion as a "rhetorical resource" that allows writers to persuade themselves of the need for change or new ways of thinking in relation to self and world—the change that Pennebaker's research bears out because changes or improvements in physical or psychological status results in a re-defined self (Micciche 1). Writing makes these abstract changes concrete, which enables

the writer to interact with the discourse of society or the academy from a more fully articulated position. This position engenders confidence and stability and allows writers/students to participate in the academic/social discourse to a greater degree. Therefore, emotion is the catalyst that prompts action that results in "interpretations and judgments, change and movement" (Micciche 14). As to Pennebaker's (and others) focus on the healing quality of written emotional expressive, it is change that determines and promotes healing (DeSalvo 10).

I believe the goal of first-year composition is to teach students the power of writing to create change on many levels. But we do not need to overtly teach ideology to do so. Such ideology, or ideas, originates within the individual person who is moved by emotion by a dissonance between what she/he feels and what he/she experiences. Allen laments the academy's message for students conveyed through Greek philosophers to "Know thyself" while providing no opportunity to do so (287). Personal and emotionally expressive writing gives students the opportunity to experiment with different ideas and carry them out in safe, collaborative classroom environments (Moran, Elbow, Allen, Berman, Paley). These ideas may result in a commitment to battle racial injustice after analyzing emotions connected to a personal experience of racism. Or a passion to teach the power of writing may emerge from a breast cancer survivor's life-changing experience with writing. In either case, writing—writing for life and all that it entails and requires of us—should be the primary goal of first-year composition.

Unfortunately, writing in school engenders an intense emotional response, either positive or negative. The writers I have worked with in freshman composition and the writing center are ashamed by their (lack of) skills. They are anxious about how their

writing will be (and is) evaluated. When teachers assign topics, students experience everything from apathy to elation. If we are lucky enough to receive an elated response it is because students feel a connection to the topic. Connections are emotional and this is the "stickiness" Micciche is referring to, students connect to topics because they *feel* something for them. They resonate with them because they have a relationship with a certain topic, an experience concerning the subject, or an understanding about their topic. Slowing down the runaway process of an intense emotional response through writing gives writers an opportunity to break down its constituent parts and to examine the response. Then they can start asking questions about how and why such a response came to be since emotion signals to writers and thinkers that something about this issue needs to be attended to, something that needs to be explored in order for meaning (or sense) to be made.

Now it can stop right there. Without help, without the tools necessary to make the jump from private to public, from personal to social, writers can wallow in their own emotional soup of words, spiraling downward into egocentricity and self-indulgence. In this sense, the critics are right; emotions can be a dangerous commodity if allowed to turn exclusively and excessively inward. The objective then is to teach students/writers how to use emotions toward an end that not only profits them but also society as well. The self is always a part of the larger society. There is a connection, a bond between the two, self and society, built on emotion, whether the relationship is mutually beneficial or fraught with struggle and strife. In either case, therapeutic writing and/or reflective, personal writing can be a life long process. This writing process seeks to improve, to

strengthen, to change, to reconnect, to adjust the relationship between the individual and society.

Students engage and participate in the writing process and academic discourse as they come to understand how they influence and are influenced by society. This is the stated goal of most first-year composition courses: to grow as responsible participants in the community at large. However, without personal investment—which is made through emotion—this goal will not be realized (Micciche 3). The *best* approach is to use emotion to our advantage in teaching writing and to the students' advantage as they learn to engage in a lifetime pursuit of knowledge and meaning making.

Understandably, such an approach will cause discomfort and concern, especially for writing teachers who would like to keep clear boundaries between "therapy" and teaching. Taking these concerns into consideration, I will present a hybrid composition pedagogy in the next chapter that seeks to blend those elements of therapeutic writing with established composition pedagogies (as outlined in Chapter 2) that will best serve the goals, needs, and desires of both students and teachers. My goal is to offer an accessible and easily implemented model for teaching first-year composition that addresses the issue of using emotion to attain the aims of not only the academy but also the individual and society as well. The last chapter will also contain writing exercises and assignments that use emotive writing's capacity to elicit change while addressing first-year composition's goal of teaching students to write for specific audiences and purposes.

Chapter 4

A New Pedagogical Approach

The first three chapters of this thesis have laid the groundwork for the development of an approach to teaching first-year composition that utilizes the powerful learning quality of personal and emotionally expressive writing. Research has shown, and continues to show, that emotionally written expressive helps writers explore and examine the emotional components of personal experience and that this process leads to not only a better understanding of self but also an individual who is better able to participate in and contribute to society (Pennebaker, Klein and Boals, Smythe). Chapter 2 established connections between therapeutic writing and four influential composition pedagogies. The similarities between therapeutic writing and expressivist, feminist, collaborative, and process pedagogies constitute the foundation upon which to build a hybrid approach to teaching writing that incorporates and interweaves the use of emotion as "a category of analysis." And finally, I have argued for a shift from overtly ideological frameworks of teaching writing to a pedagogy that focuses on and emphasizes the acquisition of writing skills that will enable students to participate in both academic and social discourse.

I contend that such an approach will best serve students and teach a life long skill that will enable them to not only succeed in the academy but also succeed in the discourse of lived experience. Writing is a powerful medium for expression, for learning, for confronting diversity and dissonance, and for creating students, individuals, and citizens who are aware and concerned about of who they are and the importance of their interactions within society. The goal of blending the therapeutic aspects of writing with

the established pedagogical practices of the expressivist, feminist, collaborative, and process movements is to produce individuals who are able to use a commitment to writing and learning as a way to work through the difficulties that will be part of a life long quest to make sense of and influence an ever-changing society.

Many composition scholars who favor the use of personal writing in first-year composition have written articles that espouse this viewpoint without offering practical solutions for implementation. Often these articles do not address concerns with regard to teaching students to write for different audiences and purposes. Charles M. Anderson and Marian M. MacCurdy have compiled an excellent anthology of articles written by composition scholars who advocate the healing properties of writing in their book, *Writing and Healing: Toward an Informed Practice,* and their book presents impassioned support for situating emotionally expressive writing in composition. However, only one of the fifteen contributions to the anthology offers suggestions for writing assignments that move students from personal narratives to research-based argumentative papers and these assignments are only briefly described (Allen). These scholars advocate for personal and emotionally expressive writing in writing classrooms, but they do not provide concrete examples of how to do so in a sustained and coordinated manner.

Similarly, Micciche makes a strong case for the concept of emotion as a rhetorical device that can be used in analysis of people and ideas (16). But she readily admits that although she has placed "teaching" in the title of her book, the pedagogical ideas she presents are "speculative and propositional" (49). Most readers will find her suggestions more theoretical than practical, with an emphasis on teaching students about emotions through readings and performance/play rather than showing students how to use emotion

as a tool for critical thinking and analysis (56). While Micciche presents a unique and useable concept of emotion as a "category of analysis," the examples of classroom activities and assignments do not directly relate to writing assignments. One of the activities she describes relies on a performance study approach where students tape record themselves reading a selected text and then analyze vocal qualities that may indicate an emotional response (57). In another example, Micciche relates first a student conference and then a classroom discussion about the "use of emotion as a basis for doing critical work" but does not show her readers how to incorporate this in written assignments (68). Micciche's book adds much to stimulate thoughtful dialogue about emotion in first-year composition; however, the discussion does not offer usable suggestions for incorporating emotion into writing assignments.

Perhaps the most thorough and helpful discussion of the kinds of writing assignments that would best teach students to use emotion as a "category of analysis" is presented by Molly Moran in her article "Toward a Writing and Healing Approach in the Basic Writing Classroom: One Professor's Odyssey," which comprised about four pages of the article (as compared with the often cursory one to two paragraphs most articles devote to the topic). While she does not offer examples of specific writing assignments, she does present a good overview of how she designs her class and the progression of writing tasks she assigns students. I believe that Moran's ideas have the most potential in terms of being practical and accessible while providing both the benefits that personal writing can bring to students and the necessary training in conventional academic discourse. Her assignments and exercises start with personal, often emotion-filled writing that progresses to thesis-supported reflection, analysis, and finally research-based

argumentation. I have used Moran's basic framework to design writing assignments and exercises that elicit the positive outcomes Pennebaker's research shows in terms of personal development while at the same time using Micciche's "category of analysis" concept to help students learn to use emotion effectively and prudently to achieve the goals of first-year composition—writing for different audiences and purposes. By doing so, I hope to situate personal writing in first-year composition with a new level of respect for what it can do for students and the teaching of writing.

As I present these assignments/exercises, it will be helpful to revisit the four conditions Sharon Bray maintains must exist in order for writing to be therapeutic. These conditions, as Chapter 2 illustrated, align well with the basic tenets of expressivist, feminist, collaborative, and process pedagogies. The four conditions are: 1) writing prompts must facilitate emotional processing by invoking either positive or negative emotion, 2) writers should strive to create a coherent narrative in order to obtain the best results, 3) writers should work on expanding and revising the initial writing by adding/deleting pertinent details, focusing on a specific theme, reframing ideas, events or experiences, and analysis, and 4) the writing environment should be conducive to such emotional exploration by being safe and supportive (*When Words Heal* 21).

It should also be noted that in addition to the specific writing assignments/exercises used in a classroom with the combined focus that I am proposing, grammar and mechanical issues would not be ignored. These issues would be addressed as part of the regular class schedule, specifically addressing those sentence-level concerns that were consistently shown in individual student's writing. Even emotionally expressive writing needs to be clear and free from mechanical errors if it is to do the

work that it is intended to do: communicate thoughts and ideas effectively, coherently, and concisely. Not only has Pennebaker's research shown that clear and coherent narratives produce the best (health) outcomes, but also Micciche's concept of emotion as a "category of analysis" requires that students be clear in their thinking and writing when emotion is used as a rhetorical strategy.

I also advocate continuous grading of assignments throughout the course rather than reserving a grade until the end of the class as in the portfolio method because I believe that students need this kind of clear and front-loaded evaluative feedback to ascertain how they are mastering the skills taught. Continuous grading also affords the teacher constant feedback about students' level of understanding of the material. Adjustments in lesson plans and assignments can be made in accordance with the progress of the students. In-class writing tasks, freewriting exercises, or other invention strategies could be graded in the standard manner, or a "soft-grading" method involving checks, check-minus, or check-plus. Larger writing assignments and papers with a specified learning objective would receive a standard letter grade. Please see Appendix C for the proposed grading rubric.

The major paper assignments are the end result of layers of writing through the course. Each writing task builds on the previous one and they all begin with inventive and emotive strategies. I have outlined these strategies, their purposes and how they work in the following section.

Invention and Emotive Strategies

Focused freewriting and/or brainstorming techniques form the basis of the strategies used for both the generation of ideas for further writing and to evoke an emotional response. At the beginning of each class period, students would be required to write for ten minutes in a notebook on one of two writing prompts. More than one prompt should be made available to students so that they don't feel pressure to write about any given topic. Since Burton and King's study (University of Missouri) revealed that writing about positive emotions are just as beneficial as writing about negative ones, writing prompts should reflect this option. Some of the writing prompts that Moran suggests are: "first disappointment," "moment of pure happiness," "loneliness," and "snowfall" (105). Writing prompts in the beginning of the semester should be more generic, such as the ones Moran uses, and progress to accompany reading assignments and align more closely with an upcoming writing assignment. Students could be asked to freewrite about how they felt about a particular author's point of view in a reading or write a reflection on the social implications of a personal experience. At the end of each class, the notebook would be checked and recorded by the teacher (in terms of completion, not evaluation), but returned to the student as a compilation of ideas for further exploration/writing.

These notebooks, or Idea Journals as I call them, serve several purposes for students. The writing responses recorded in the notebooks allow students to emote (through writing) on a variety of subjects and prompts without being evaluated on the writing. The emotive quality of the writing frees up available working memory as Klein

and Boals' work indicates, thereby aiding in the learning process (Chapter 1). The connection between the written emotional expression and the subjects or readings that prompted them can be explored through classroom discussion or further writing. Teachers can use the journal entries to challenge students to critically analyze any given emotional response to a prompt by posing questions that ask students to draw conclusions from their emotional response in terms of larger societal issues. Sample questions might include: What in your life experience has caused you to respond in this way? Do you think this is an appropriate response to the situation? Why or why not? What does your response say about your values, beliefs, and assumptions about this issue? What does it say about others or society's values, beliefs, and assumptions? These questions offer students a way to "think through" or critically analyze their opinions and the reasons they hold those opinions and lays the groundwork for the kind of emotional analysis that will be needed to write clear, thoughtful papers.

Another purpose of the Idea Journal is to provide a wealth of ideas that students can turn into full-length papers. The major writing assignments ask students to mine their journals for ideas that can be further explored, analyzed, or researched for the personal narrative, analysis, and argumentative paper. For example, a student may have written a journal entry about his/her experience with depression and wants to pursue the issue of adolescent depression in an argumentative paper calling for destigmitization and better screening of adolescents in light of a rise in school violence. An analytical paper might use this personal experience to examine societal/cultural influences that may contribute to adolescent depression. Students often complain that they don't know what to write papers about or are unhappy with assigned topics. The Idea Journal allows

students to create their own topics (with teacher guidance) with the added benefit of a consistent practice of writing. Most writers agree that in order to improve writing skills, the most important exercise is to write regularly and consistently. The Idea Journal accomplishes this goal and provides students with many self-generated topics for course papers.

Idea Journal writing could also be used as a starting point for the more formal Response Papers. First-year composition students are often unfamiliar with the Response Paper format. They don't realize that their journal entries are "responses" to the prompts given. However, these journal responses tend to be undeveloped. The journal responses could be a tool to teach students how to create a formal response to a reading or other outside text. If the journal-writing prompt is connected to the reading, then students can generate a formal response from their journal entry. Teachers will need to explain the parameters of a Response Paper and instruct students to support their feelings about the outside text with specific examples from that text.

This method of using journal entries to generate and support Response Papers links the two both in terms of writing and emotion and provides yet another link to the analysis paper assignment. Response papers are "mini" analytical papers where students are asked to critically read and evaluate the ideas presented in an outside text as they critically analyze and interpret their own ideas in relation to it. Each writing task from journal writing, in-class writing, and response papers build on one another to move students toward writing the kinds of papers the academy seeks from first-year composition. This process of scaffolding assignments is common in the composition classroom. The difference here, in this pedagogy, is the thread of emotion that brings all

the pieces together to form the final product of writing for different audiences and purposes.

To that end, I will present some examples of assignments designed to accomplish these writing goals using emotionally expressive writing as the basis for the assignments, beginning with an in-class writing exercise example.

Example of In-class Writing/Freewrite

Objective: to explore thoughts, feelings, and ideas for Personal Narrative Paper

Prompts: "Where I'm From" by George Ella Lyon

"What's in My Journal" by William Stafford

"The Things They Carried" by Tim O'Brien

Instructions:

Part 1: Choose a line or phrase from one of the short readings that catches your attention. Don't worry about why it catches your attention right now, and it doesn't matter if it causes a positive or negative reaction in you. Choose a line that resonates with you, that you like the sound of, that reminds you of something else, or that makes you think of something in your own life. Write that phrase or line on the top of the page and then write continuously for ten minutes anything that comes to mind as you think about those words. Don't worry about spelling, punctuation, or grammar. Just write.

Part 2: Read over what you wrote in Part 1. Is there a theme that emerges—something that keeps coming up over and over in your writing about that phrase? If you can't see a theme, ask a classmate to read what you've written. Your classmate may be able to see something that you didn't. When you find the repeating idea or theme, write that idea at

the top of a new page. Freewrite on that idea or theme for ten minutes just as you did in Part 1. Don't worry about errors. Just write.

Alternative Exercise: Students read Tim O'Brien's "The Things They Carried," and the instructor has students make a list of the things they would take with them—the things that they deem necessary to them personally—if they had to evacuate their home. After they have compiled the list, they should freewrite on one or two of those items and why they chose to carry them. Each writing session should run ten to fifteen minutes and should focus on content rather than errors.

The above examples are indicative of the structure of in-class writing assignments done in a writing classroom that honors and values emotion. Other prompts might include focused freewriting about a private journal entry, a word or phrase prompt, a topic brought up in class, a topic under consideration for a paper assignment, or responses to in-class readings of external text. All writing prompts should utilize the concept of emotion as "a category of analysis," and draw students' attention to the rhetorical nature and use of emotions.

Major Writing Assignments

The sample syllabus (Appendix D) illustrates how these types of writing assignments are utilized through out the course. These assignments are the building blocks for the major paper assignments students are required to complete. For example, since students write daily in class, an in-class writing prompt can come from one of the

reading assignments, another relevant issue the teacher wishes to explore, or even the rhetorical concepts themselves. Based on Pennebaker's study of students' emotionally written expression about course material (Chapter 1), in-class writing exercises that focus on a specific rhetorical concept such as persuasion or reflection would be helpful in achieving students' understanding of these concepts. For example, students could be asked to write their understanding of an opposing viewpoint to one of the readings as a way to analyze counterarguments. Incorporating writing in each class period will help students synthesize the concepts and conventions they are being taught.

Since in-class writing provides the basis for all the major writing assignments, it is necessary to see where this writing leads. In the following sections I present sample writing assignments for the major papers required in the class. The sequence of these assignments is designed to minimize potential ethical and practical problems associated with emotionally expressive writing. The beginning of a semester, especially for first-year writers, is a time of increased vulnerability, but also one of increased support as students are generally more connected to significant others at the beginning of their college experience and can rely on this support system for help in times of stress. One of the goals of emotionally expressive writing is to demystify the emotional response and learn how to use it to one's advantage. The sequence I present seeks to capitalize on the emotional climate of first-year writers' worlds while providing a safe and productive avenue for expression. However, while I sequence these assignments such that the assignments move from an emotion-based personal narrative to an argumentative, research-based paper based on an issue that surfaced from the emotionally expressive writing, it should be noted that other sequencing is possible. The assignments can be

adapted and the arrangement changed to reflect the goals and preferences of the individual instructor. Please see Appendix D, the sample syllabus, for a more complete sequencing of assignments.

In the sequencing pattern I have chosen, the personal narrative is the first (and maybe second) paper assigned. I choose to start with emotion and lead students through the emotion that has emerged in their Idea Journals to productive, cohesive narratives. The following is a sample assignment sheet for this first personal narrative paper.

Major Paper Assignment #1: Personal Narrative

Objective: To explore thoughts, feelings, and ideas about an issue, event, or personal experience that surfaced in one of the freewriting exercises in a narrative format.

Learning goals: To demonstrate understanding of the writing process from invention to drafting. The student will be able to use clear, descriptive language and arrange thoughts and ideas into well-organized paragraphs and final draft. The final draft should reflect a well-thought out narrative that demonstrates the careful use details to support the theme of the experience. The writing should be free of ambiguity and create a concise and cohesive narrative without errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

Audience: The personal narrative is meant to inform your audience about something of importance to you and your development as a person and student. For this essay, consider your peers and your teacher as your audience.

Instructions: Choose a personal experience from your freewriting notebook. Your task is to write a narrative—tell a story—that illustrates the significance of this experience for you. Through clear and descriptive language craft an essay that describes the experience

for your readers, how it has influenced your thinking, and the significance of this experience on your life. As you prepare to write, read over your freewriting notebook to stimulate your thinking and ask yourself the following questions about this significant experience (you may even want to freewrite your answers to the questions to get you started with the writing assignment):

- When did this experience happen? What were the precipitating events or what others things were going on at the same time?
- What caused things to happen as they did? Did you have control over the circumstances or not?
- Give the reader some background information about the experience? How old were you? What were you doing or not doing? Were there other people involved? In other words, set up the scene in which this experience took place.
- Why is this experience significant? What does it mean for/to you personally?
- How has this experience changed you and/or your perspective on life, school, family, society, yourself? How has it influenced or defined the person you are today?

Length: 4 – 5 double-spaced, processed pages in MLA format.

Peer Review Date:

The goal of the personal narrative is to highlight some significant event or experience in students' lives and reveal the emotional connections to that experience. The next paper is a textual analysis of the *pathos* or emotional content/appeal of one of the readings done in class. After writing the first paper that asks students to reflect on

their own experience, this short assignment requires students to critically read and analyze how another author uses emotion to convey his/her ideas.

Major Paper Assignment #2-Short Textual Analysis

Objective: To teach students to analyze the *pathos* or emotional content/appeal of an outside text.

Learning Goals: To familiarize students with the concept of textual analysis in regard to emotion. Students must demonstrate the ability to critically read, evaluate, and analyze the rhetorical moves made by an author in regard to *pathos* or emotion.

Audience: For this paper, consider your audience to be your teacher and peers. Your task is to inform your audience of your findings about the text you have chosen.

Instructions: You will choose one of the readings from class to analyze for this paper. Your tasks are to carefully and critically read and analyze how the author uses emotion to make her/his point. As you read and prepare to write, consider the following:

- Identify the primary emotion in the piece and how the author uses it to make his/her point. If there are other emotions used, note these as well and how they add (or detract) from the author's ideas/thoughts.
- What kind of language is used to convey these emotions? Give specific examples of words and/or phrases that you believe are designed to evoke a particular emotion.
- Is the author successful in her/his attempt to effectively use emotion? Why or why not? Support your opinion with examples from the text.

- What was your emotional response to the text? Why did you have this response? Point to specific places in the text that made you feel that way and explain why.

Length: 2 – 3 double-spaced, processed pages in MLA format.

Peer Review Date:

The connections established in the previous two papers form the basis of the next paper in the sequence, the reflection paper. Here students are asked to examine those emotions more closely in regard to their significance in a larger cultural or social context. The Reflection Paper builds on the personal narrative and the textual analysis paper and constitutes the next progression in the sequence.

Major Paper Assignment #3: Reflection Paper

Objective: To encourage reflection and analysis of emotion associated with a personal experience. This paper builds on the Personal Narrative paper by asking students to identify the emotional response and situate that response within a larger context. The key here is for students to move from emotion to a reflection on the causes for their response and what that says about their culture, community, or society.

Learning goals: The purpose of this paper is to encourage your audience to think differently about the experience and issue you are writing about (that has been identified from Paper #1). In order to do that, you must examine the emotional response from the personal narrative paper by questioning it, reflecting on its possible meaning, and analyzing what this response says about society or the larger issue you uncovered. Or you choose another experience from your journal, but the task is the same: to reflect on

your emotional response to the experience in terms of its possible meaning and what this may say about society or a larger issue.

Audience: Your readers will be people who may have had a similar experience and want to be informed about another perspective or way of thinking about it.

Instructions: For this paper you will examine, reflect on, and analyze any emotions you may have surrounding a personal experience. Your task is to develop a thesis statement that communicates your understanding of the significance of your emotional response. For example, if you have had the experience of being wrongly accused of shoplifting while shopping with a group of friends and you felt anger in that situation, think about what that anger is telling you (and us). Where you angry because it was unfair? Was there racial or another kind of profiling going on by store clerks? Guilt by association with one of your friends who has shoplifted in the past? Think about how your experience might tie in with a larger social issue. As you prepare to write, ask yourself the following questions:

- What emotion(s) did this experience bring up?
- Identify the specific feelings: fear, anger, frustration, happiness, sadness, loneliness.
- Why did you have this emotional response? What in your thinking caused these feelings to surface?
- What do you think your emotions are telling you to do (remember: emotions move us to change situations or ourselves)? Are your emotions telling you that you need to change your way of thinking or that the situation needs to change?

- What can you say about your experience that is the same or different than other people in your situation?

Your paper should draw the reader in and inform them about your experience or situation. Through your analysis of your emotional reaction you should present another perspective or another way of looking at your experience.

Length: 4 – 6 double-spaced, processed pages in MLA format.

Peer Review Date:

The Reflection Paper asks students to critically think about and read their emotional response to an experience, situating it within a larger context. This critical thinking is the beginning of an analysis and synthesis process, a process that continues in the next major paper assignment, the Analysis Paper. In this paper, students are asked to consult, critically read, and synthesize ideas, thoughts, and/or feelings from external texts and form a relationship between their point of view and those of the authors they have consulted.

Major Paper Assignment #4: Analysis Paper

Objective: To teach the rhetorical concepts of *logos, pathos,* and *ethos* through evaluation and analysis of the student's emotional response to a personal experience in relation to outside texts that address the same experience or issue. Additionally, this paper is designed to teach students to evaluate their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in relation to their cultural or social situation, finding common ground between their subjective experience and those of others in the larger social/cultural context. The

objective of this assignment is for students to both analyze their experience and synthesize it with the views expressed by other authors, using outside texts to support their point of view.

Learning goals: To teach students to respond and analyze the ideas presented in external texts in relation to their own ideas and experiences. This assignment asks students to critically read a work(s) by another author on the same (or similar) issue that they have chosen. Students must demonstrate the concepts of *logos, pathos, and ethos* by analyzing these rhetorical moves in the outside texts they are using and by creating a paper that situates their personal experience within the experience of others, using some of the same rhetorical strategies.

Audience: Consider that your audience is made up of those affected by or interested in the same kind of experience you had. Or they may be people who don't understand the significance of your experience. In either case, your job is to convince your audience that your experience speaks to a larger societal issue that needs to be addressed.

Sources: You must use 2 – 4 outside sources to support your thesis in this paper. They must be properly cited and included in a Works Cited page at the end of your paper. We will discuss MLA citation and Works Cited formatting in class.

Instructions: This paper asks you to evaluate and analyze your thoughts, ideas, and feelings surrounding a personal experience and to do so using outside sources that have been written about the same topic (these sources must be pre-approved). This means that you must critically and carefully read these articles in order to understand the author's point of view and make connections between your experience, thoughts, and feelings and those of the author in order to form some conclusions. For example, you have had a

personal experience with homelessness and want to examine your feelings about it and see what others are saying about the problem. You could seek out articles that look into the issue of homelessness from a psychological, sociological, or spiritual aspect. You may want to explore the nature of human compassion and develop some ideas or theories concerning society's response to the homeless person or make some claim about the causes and/or implications of homelessness. Your goal is to arrive at some conclusion about how your emotional response ties in with what others are saying and what this means on a larger social or community scale. Your thesis should reflect a judgment that you have made about the appropriateness, effects, or implications of your feelings in this situation and how this relates to a larger issue in society. You should be able to support your thesis with evidence from other sources—others who have shared or written about this issue. These sources should add depth to your own ideas and you should synthesize the ideas and/or emotions from these sources with your own to show that your response is well grounded in the reality of others' experiences. This means that you must cite these sources and authors when discussing how their ideas support your own. As you prepare to write, think about these questions:

- What does your emotions/experience say about society, school, family, relationships, power, class, gender, race, etc? Make connections between what you know and what others have experienced. What do others have to say about this issue?
- Establish your credibility (ethos). Why should your audience listen to you? Show your audience with specific examples that you understand your experience and how it relates to the larger issue. You should also be able to establish the

credibility of your sources, citing what makes your source relevant to the issue (we will discuss the credibility of sources in class).

- Make sure that your reasoning or your line of thinking is clear and logical (logos). Do your evaluations and conclusions make sense? Do they follow a logical progression in terms of reasoned thinking? Apply these same questions to the sources you read for this paper and be able to clearly present the reasoning of the authors you have chosen to work with.
- How can you use the emotions you felt about this experience to connect with and engage your audience (pathos)? What emotions do you want to appeal to in them: justice, compassion, solidarity? What emotion appeal(s) can you identify in the sources you are using? Are they valid, successful? How do these authors use emotion to engage their audience?

Length: 6 – 8 double-spaced, processed pages, MLA format.

Sources: 2-3 outside texts must be cited and included in a Works Cited page.

Peer Review Date:

The next (and final) paper in the sequence is the Argumentative Paper. In preparation for this paper, I advocate, as Moran does, requiring students to read sample arguments such as "H.L. Mencken's argument against abolishing the death penalty" or Portelli's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" from *The World is a Text* (108, 657). The sample arguments would be used to study the rhetorical strategies used and offer students an example of turning an emotionally charged opinion into a well-supported position paper.

Students are instructed to find something from their Idea Journal for the impetus for this assignment. The assignment sheet for this paper follows.

Major Paper Assignment #5: Research-based, Argumentative Paper

Objective: To translate the emotional response to a personal experience into a thesis-supported, researched argumentative paper in which the student takes a position or proposes a specific solution to an existing problem.

Learning goals: In addition to creating a clear, concise, cohesive paper in which the student chooses a position on an issue or proposes a solution to an identified problem, the student must demonstrate effective use of research to support his/her claim. The student must demonstrate understanding of how to use databases, determine the credibility of a source, correctly paraphrase, quote, and cite sources according to MLA format. A MLA formatted Works Cited page must accompany this assignment.

Audience: For this paper I want you to really identify your audience. Who are you trying to convince and why? Think in terms of age, class, gender, race, religion, education, and professional background. You are trying to persuade your audience to accept or position or adopt your solution. Having a clear picture in your mind of who your audience is will help you decide how to develop your argument because your will tailor it to their specific needs. Use the passion of your emotional investment in this issue to make a strong case for your position.

Sources: You must use 4 – 6 outside sources for this paper. That means that your Works Cited page should list 4 – 6 articles, books, web sources, etc. that you have used to research your position on your topic and are properly cited in the text of your paper.

Instructions: Look back over your freewriting notebook for an entry on a topic that is personal for you **and** can be researched and developed into an argument about a controversial issue (Moran 108). For example, if you wrote about your parents' divorce in your notebook, you may want to research the divorce laws in your state in order to see if you think they need to be changed to make divorce less accessible or that requirements for marriage counseling should be in place for all couples contemplating divorce. Your research should lead you to take a particular position on your issue or to develop a solution to a perceived problem. Once you have decided on your position on this issue you will need to research both sides (at least two sides, there could be more). You will use the sources that agree with you to support your case, but you will also have to address the opposing viewpoint and address their concerns with the evidence you have collected. Your paper should present a well-supported, well-organized, clear defense of your position or solution in this matter. Strive for clarity in sentence structure and wording as well as thought.

Length: 10 – 12 double-spaced, processed pages, MLA format.

Peer Review Due:

The preceding sections have provided examples of both in-class and major paper assignments. As stated earlier, I have chosen this particular sequence of assignments because I feel that students come to the academy in an emotionally vulnerable state and I want to capitalize on that energy and translate it to the writing tasks that will be required of them in first-year composition. However, as I also conceded earlier, this sequence is adaptable to the desired learning outcomes of each individual instructor. With some modifications, these assignments can be used in reverse order or interchangeably. These

examples offer a more solid pedagogical framework on which to base a first-year composition class with a focus on emotional written expression.

Summary of an Emotion-Honoring Composition Pedagogy

The preceding writing assignments reflect a different approach to the use of emotionally expressive or personal writing in first-year composition. The key element in all assignments utilizing such an approach is to guide students in learning how to effectively use emotions to participate in academic discourse while at the same time fostering personal development in terms of self-awareness and understanding. As students progress through the assignments, classroom time should be spent on teaching the writing process (pre-writing, writing, and revision), style issues, and grammatical/mechanical concerns. Also central to such a class is the peer review since this is a proven method of addressing audience awareness issues, essay development, and proofreading skills. I believe that writing exercises, prompts, and assignments can focus on both external texts (as these reflect issues of importance to students) and student texts. The use of readings or external texts maintains the connection between the student and the larger social context by situating her/his experience within a group or discourse community. The focus on student texts enables students to learn how to work with their own writing, teaches them revision strategies, and communicates a commitment to the value of student discourse.

As more research is done linking the expression of positive emotion to cognitive and academic outcomes, my hope is that this will encourage more studies into the efficacy of using emotion as a productive rhetorical tool that will help students improve

both writing and thinking skills. Moran reports an increase in average grade of her basic writers from 80% to 86% since she started employing therapeutic writing techniques in the classroom, stating these findings "suggest that emphasizing personal writing in a basic writing course and encouraging students to explore (painful) personal issues can launch them on a journey toward psychological integration and academic success" (110, 111). This "psychological integration and academic success" is a result, I believe, of the higher-order cognitive processes that are facilitated by words of "insight and causation" that emerge from emotionally expressive writing as Pennebaker's research has shown (Chapter 1). If Moran's assessment of her students' writing skills and Pennebaker's findings are accurate, much is to be gained from implementing emotion as a "category of analysis" in first-year composition. The improved writing and thinking skills that result from wrestling with personal issues in relation to society will help secure students' place in the academy and in the community into which they will enter upon graduation.

As students wrestle with both personal and social issues through writing they will gain proficiency in the process of writing. Tantamount to our understanding of the writing (and learning) process is the revelation that emotionally expressive or personal writing involves and improves higher cognitive functioning, the very processes we strive to enhance in students through teaching critical writing and thinking skills. These cognitive processes of interpreting, analyzing, and applying emotional data form the very basis of learning. The brain's ability, through language, to construct a narrative of self and its relation to the world eventually leads to knowledge acquisition. The skills developed through the analysis of personal emotional data, as they occur in the act of writing, can positively influence the composition classroom and the writing done there.

These skills can also shape how knowledge is perceived and acquired. Knowledge, concepts, or ideas are not free of bias or emotion. All knowledge evolves from feelings about how things work or ought to work in the world. Students react to new information in different ways based on their cultural and societal backgrounds. The emotion expressed in personal writing provides a "category of analysis," or a way to "generate attachments to others, to world-views, and to a whole array of sources and objects," providing students a reference point as they wrestle with new ideas and new ways of doing things (Micciche 1).

In this way, personal writing, emotionally expressive writing, and analyzing texts via *pathos* is truly integrative learning at its best, seeking to unite the personal with the academic in terms of the development of students and the betterment of society. Learning is about discovering new ways of understanding, new ways of being within society. Being respectful of the role of emotions in these processes will lead to an increased understanding of the writing/thinking paradigm and offer if not new ways of teaching writing, an enhanced awareness of how emotion factors into the teaching of writing.

Similarly, being respectful of the work that both positive and negative emotions do for our students (and their ability to engage in academic discourse) will promote a more humanistic approach to teaching. The disconnect between academic and personal writing seems to indicate a less than humanistic approach to teaching writing in the academy. Just as Jane Tompkins laments the lack of personal voice in academic writing, Molly Moran "struggl[ed] with feelings of inadequacy and foolishness, thinking that the personal things I was so interested in and so deeply engaged with writing about…were

not appropriate for a book by an academic" (94-95). I find that just as with differing viewpoints, when we objectify personal knowledge it is a way of keeping our distance, of not engaging in a connection that may yield fruit in respect to different ways of thinking.

As always, I circle back to Guy Allen's conclusions after his foray into the realm of personal, emotive writing in composition. Allen concludes, "[s]tudents who live consciously in language inform themselves and their fellow students and the society in which they seek a role. They become citizen participants in learning, citizens who come not only to learn, but to teach us and change us" (288). If using emotionally expressive and personal writing can achieve these goals for our students and the academy, both will benefit and both will be enriched.

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Appendix A

Table 2
Outcome Types

Outcome type formed	Specific outcomes	No. of studies assessing this outcome
Reported health	Health center visits	8
	Self-reported symptoms	3
	Upper respiratory illness	1
Psychological well-being	Positive affect	3
	Negative affect	3
	Happiness	2
	Anxiety	1
	Sadness	1
	Intrusions	1
	Adjustment	1
	General temperament	1
	Adjustment to college	2
	Adjustment to high school	1
Physiological functioning	Phytohemagglutinin	1
	Concanavalin A	1
	T-helper lymphocytes	1
	T-cytotoxic/suppressor lymphocytes	1
	Natural killer cells	1
	Epstein-Barr antibodies	1
	Hepatitis B antibodies	1
	Blood pressure	1
	Heart rate	1
	Triglycerides	1
	Cholesterol	1
	High density lipids	1
	Low density lipids	1
	Uric acid	1
	Albumin	1
	Globulin	1
	Liver function (SGOT, SGPT)	1
General functioning	Reemployment	1
	Grade point average	3
	Absenteeism	2
	Cognitive functioning (thought generation, reaction time)	1
	School behavior	1
Health behaviors[a]	Alcohol use	
	Drug use (including cigarettes, caffeine)	
	Exercise	
	Sleeping habits	
	Eating habits	

[a] The precise health behaviors used in each study were often not provided, so frequencies assessed are not available.

Appendix B

"Fear" by Raymond Carver

Fear of seeing a police car pull into the drive.
Fear of falling asleep at night.
Fear of not falling asleep.
Fear of the past rising up.
Fear of the present taking flight.
Fear of the telephone that rings in the dead of the night.
Fear of electrical storms.
Fear of the cleaning woman who has a spot on her cheek!
Fear of dogs I've been told won't bite.
Fear of anxiety!
Fear of having to identify the body of a dead friend.
Fear of running out of money.
Fear of having too much, though people will not believe this.
Fear of psychological profiles.
Fear of being late and fear of arriving before anyone else.
Fear of my children's handwriting on envelopes.
Fear they'll die before I do, and I'll feel guilty.
Fear of having to live with my mother in her old age, and mine.
Fear of confusion. Fear this day will end on an unhappy note.
Fear of waking up to find you gone.
Fear of not loving and fear of not loving enough.
Fear that what I love will prove lethal to those I love.
Fear of death.
Fear of living too long.

Fear of death.

I've said that.

Appendix C

Grading Rubric:

Idea Journal: The idea journal will constitute 15% of the overall course grade and will evaluated as follows:

- A=No missed entries and all entries are 1 -2 pages in length
- B= 1 - 3 missed entries and 1 – 3 entries less than 1 page in length
- C= 4 – 8 missed entries and 4 – 8 entries less than 1 page in length
- D= 8 – 12 missed entries and 8 – 12 entries less than 1 page in length
- F= More than 12 missed entries and more than 12 entries less than 1 page in length

Response Papers (to readings/prompts): Response papers will constitute 25% of the overall course grade and will be graded on the same criteria and standards as Major Paper Assignments.

Major Paper Assignments: These will comprise 60% of the overall course grade and will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Content: substance, a clearly defined issue and thesis statement, development of ideas, adherence to the objectives of the specific assignment and use of external sources when necessary.
- Coherence: organization of thought, paragraph unity, and overall organization of paper. Clarity of language and sentence structure will be evaluated.
- Mechanical: proper use of punctuation, spelling and grammar rules.

For both Response Papers and Major Assignment Papers:

A: Greatly exceeds basic requirements of the assignment in a way that shows mastery of above concepts.

B: Exceeds basic requirements of assignment and above average mastery of concepts.

C: Meets basic requirements of assignment with some thought toward concepts.

D: Does not meet basic requirements of assignment and no thought toward concept.

F: Fails to meet requirements of assignment.

Appendix D

Syllabus for First-Year Composition Using Emotion-Based Writing

Week 1: Introduction to the class.

- Learning objective: introduce idea journal, writing process concept and invention strategies.
- Reading: "What's In My Journal," William Stafford
- Writing: 1) Diagnostic essay 2) Focused in-class freewrite in response to Stafford poem.

Week 2: Invention Strategies *The World is a Text* p 21 -23

- Learning objective: teaching brainstorming, clustering, looping, and other invention strategies as it relates to Idea Journal.
- Reading: "The Things They Carried," Tim O'Brien
- Writing: Response paper—O'Brien piece.

Week 3: Introduction to Personal Narrative *The World is a Text* p 18, p 60

- Learning objective: turning ideas (from journal) into paper topics
- Reading: reading over personal Idea Journal, in-class writing, and response paper to mine potential paper topic.
- Writing: In-class focused freewrite on one (or two) of the ideas from journal

Week 4: Audience and Purpose *Little Brown Handbook* p 12 - 15

- Learning objective: introduce students to writing for different audiences and purposes, starting with the personal narrative. To teach strategies to help students identify and effectively use emotional responses to readings and/or experiences.
- Reading: *The World is a Text,* "To Make a Friend, Be a Friend," David Sedaris.
- Writing: Response paper—Sedaris piece.

Week 5: Continue Audience and Purpose:

- Learning objective: to apply these concepts to writing of Major Paper Assignment #1.
- Reading: students' own narratives in progress via workshop/peer review.
- Writing: Major Paper Assignment #1 due.

Week 6: Reflection

- Learning objectives: teaching strategies to help students make connections between an emotional response to an issue and a larger social issue. Introduce Major Paper Assignment #2—Reflection.
- Reading: *The World is a Text*, "Censoring Myself," Betty Shamieh, p 282.
- Writing: response paper—Shamieh piece.

Week 7: Introduction to *Logos, Pathos, Ethos, Little Brown Handbook,* p 205-207

- Learning objectives: teaching the concepts of *logos, pathos,* and *ethos* and how they apply both to students' own writing and the writing of others.

- Reading: Bring in short article to have students read in class and facilitate discussion to identify and understand the use of these concepts in the article.
- Writing: Have students apply these rhetorical concepts by assigning an in-class writing about how this applies to their own writing.

Week 8: Analysis and the Use of Emotion *Little Brown Handbook,* p 25-26, p 147-48

- Learning objective: to teach students the concepts of analysis and critical thinking and apply them to emotion, using emotion to think critically about themselves and society.
- Reading: Students own drafts of Major Paper Assignment #2—Reflection in workshop/peer review setting with emphasis on the analytical quality of emotion.
- Writing: Major Paper Assignment #2—Reflection due.

Week 9: Developing Support and Using Outside Sources

- Learning objectives: introduce Major Paper Assignment #3. Students will demonstrate understanding of thesis statements, developing support for thesis, and proper use of outside sources.
- Reading: *Little Brown Handbook,* p 29- 45. *The World is a Text,* "Smells Like Teen Spirit, Student essay, Portelli
- Writing: drafting thesis statements, in-class exercise.

Week 10: Thesis Statements and Organization

- Learning objectives: continue to refine students' skills in drafting clear thesis statements, identifying need for support and organization of ideas.
- Reading: students' own texts of draft of Major Paper Assignment #3—Reflection.
- Writing: work on revising and refining students' papers in class workshop/peer review.

Week 11: Introduction to Research-Based Argumentative Paper (Major Paper #4)

- Learning objectives: to introduce students to library and database research, to teach the format of the argumentative paper, and MLA documentation skills.
- Reading: *The World is a Text,* "Building Good Arguments," p 33 – 37 and an outside reading that exemplifies these concepts. Students will also start reading through their Idea Journal for possible topics for this paper, marking them and conferencing with the teacher as to the appropriateness and feasibility of chosen topic.
- Writing: Response paper on the chosen article evaluating the argument and how the writer presented support for her/his viewpoint.

Week 12: Looking at Both Sides of an Issue

- Learning objectives: students should demonstrate the ability to identify and adequately address opposing viewpoints and translate these into clear written form in their paper.
- Reading: *The World is a Text,* "Imagined Indians," King and Springwood, p 291.
- Writing: Response paper that proposes the opposing viewpoint to the reading.

Week 13: Working on Final Paper

- Learning objectives: hands-on work with the final paper to work through the writing process, clarifies a thesis statement, build an argument and address counter arguments.
- Reading: Students own drafts of Final Paper.
- Writing: Students will submit a proposal of their argumentative paper outlining their thesis, how they will address opposing viewpoints and a working bibliography for research.

Week 14: Revising, Editing, and Proofreading Strategies

- Learning objectives: to teach and establish good revision, editing, and proofreading skills that students can utilize on their own.
- Reading: *Little Brown Handbook,* p 52 – 55 and students' own drafts.
- Writing: In-class exercise employing these strategies with their own work. Peer review.

Week 15: Wrapping it Up

- Learning objectives: students will reflect on the class and the writing process taught as a means for identifying strengths and weaknesses as writers.
- Reading: Paper presentations
- Writing: In-class, end-of-semester reflection.